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The
Teaching
of Jesus

Dr. J. P. JONES



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THE
TEACHING OF JESUS OUR LORD

BY
John Peter
REV. J. P. JONES, D.D.



THE CHRISTIAN LITERATURE SOCIETY
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IN MEMORY OF
JANET CHRISTIE VALENTINE,
WHO LABOURED AS A FAITHFUL SERVANT OF CHRIST
IN AGRA, ETC.,
FROM 1886 TO 1902.

P R E F A C E

THESE Studies in the Teaching of our Lord have been specially prepared for the youth of India. And I gladly dedicate the book to them with the prayer that it may help them to know well "the truth as it is in Jesus", and may inspire them to respond daily to His invitation to "come and learn of Me". For He is "the Way, the Truth and the Life" to all of us.

J. P. JONES.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | <i>Page</i> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| INTRODUCTION | 1—14 |
| CHAPTER I | |
| JESUS' TEACHING CONCERNING HIMSELF ... | 15—56 |
| Study | |
| I. The Fulness of Time | 15—17 |
| II. The Synoptics and John harmo- nized | 17—18 |
| III. The Messiah | 19—20 |
| IV. The Son of Man | 20—21 |
| V. The Significance of this Name ... | 21—23 |
| VI. The Son of God | 23—24 |
| VII. Our Lord's Limitations | 24—25 |
| VIII. The Eternal Son | 26—27 |
| IX. The Sinless One | 27—28 |
| X. " " (cont.) | 28—30 |
| XI. The Final Judge | 30—31 |
| XII. " " (cont.) | 31—33 |
| XIII. The Revealer of God | 33—34 |
| XIV. The Saviour of Men | 34—36 |
| XV. " " (cont.) | 36—37 |
| XVI. The Saviour as found in the Gospel of John | 37—39 |
| XVII. His Death | 39—41 |
| XVIII. " " (cont.) | 41—42 |
| XIX. " " (cont.) | 43—44 |
| XX. " " (cont.) | 44—46 |

| | <i>Page</i> |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Study | |
| XXI. His Death (cont.) ... | 46—47 |
| XXII. „ „ (cont.) ... | 47—49 |
| XXIII. „ „ (concl'd.) ... | 49—50 |
| XXIV. His Future Life and Work: | |
| (a) Resurrection ... | 50—51 |
| XXV. (b) Intercession | 51—52 |
| XXVI. (c) His Second Coming ... | 53—54 |
| XXVII. „ „ (cont.) ... | 54—55 |
| XXVIII. His Second Coming in the Gospel of John ... | 55—56 |

CHAPTER II

| | |
|---------------------------------------------|-------|
| CHRIST'S TEACHING ABOUT THE FATHER ... | 57—63 |
| I. A Contrast ... | 57—59 |
| II. What does this Fatherhood mean? ... | 59—60 |
| III. Characteristics of Fatherhood—(cont.). | 60—62 |
| IV. Fatherhood in John's Gospel ... | 62—63 |

CHAPTER III

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------|
| JESUS' TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT ... | 63—71 |
| I. The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament. | 63—64 |
| II. The Personality of the Holy Spirit ... | 64—65 |
| III. The Holy Spirit in the Life of our Lord. | 65—66 |
| IV. The Work of the Spirit ... | 67—68 |
| V. „ „ (cont.) ... | 68—69 |
| VI. „ „ (concl'd.) ... | 69—71 |

CHAPTER IV

| | |
|-------------------------------------------|-------|
| JESUS' TEACHING ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF GOD. | 71—89 |
| I. The Name of the Kingdom ... | 71—72 |
| II. The Characteristics of the Kingdom... | 73—74 |
| III. A Present and a Future Kingdom ... | 74—76 |

| Study | Page |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| IV. A Universal Kingdom | 76—77 |
| V. " " (cont.) | 77—78 |
| VI. " " (concl'd.) | 78—80 |
| VII. Conditions of Entrance into the King- dom | 80—81 |
| VIII. Conditions—(cont.) | 81—82 |
| IX. " (concl'd.) | 82—83 |
| X. Membership in the Kingdom | 84—85 |
| XI. " " (cont.) | 85—86 |
| XII. Blessings of this Kingdom | 86—87 |
| XIII. " " (cont.) | 88—89 |

CHAPTER V

| | |
|---------------------------------------------|-------|
| JESUS' TEACHING CONCERNING MAN | 89—95 |
| I. Man Supreme among God's Creatures | 89—90 |
| II. Man is the Son of God | 90—91 |
| III. He is a Prodigal Son | 91—93 |
| IV. The Child of the Devil | 93—94 |
| V. Jesus' Teaching about Children | 94—95 |

CHAPTER VI

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| OUR LORD'S TEACHING CONCERNING THE DIS- CIPLE | 96—169 |
| I. The Disciple | 96—97 |
| II. The Disciple must be Teachable | 97—99 |
| III. The Disciple a Follower of Jesus | 99—101 |
| IV. " " (cont.) | 101—102 |
| V. " " (concl'd.) | 102—103 |
| VI. The Disciple a Cross Bearer | 103—105 |
| VII. The Disciple and Sincerity | 105—107 |
| VIII. " " (cont.) | 107—108 |
| IX. " " (concl'd.) | 108—109 |

| Study | Page |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| ..X. The Disciple and Faithfulness... | 109—111 |
| XI. " " (cont.) | 111—113 |
| XII. The Disciple and Prayer ... | 113—114 |
| XIII. " " (cont.) | 115—116 |
| XIV. " " (cont.) | 116—118 |
| XV. " " (cont.) | 118—119 |
| XVI. " " (cont.) | 119—120 |
| XVII. " " (cont.) | 121—122 |
| XVIII. " " (cont.) | 122—124 |
| XIX. " " (concl'd.) | 124—125 |
| XX. The Disciple and Wealth ... | 125—127 |
| XXI. " " (cont.) | 127—128 |
| XXII. " " (concl'd.) | 128—130 |
| XXIII. The Disciple and the World ... | 130—131 |
| XXIV. " " (cont.) | 131—132 |
| XXV. The Disciple and Temptation ... | 132—134 |
| XXVI. " " (cont.) | 134—136 |
| XXVII. The Disciple and Faith ... | 136—137 |
| XXVIII. " " (cont.) | 138—139 |
| XXIX. The Disciple and Humility ... | 140—141 |
| XXX. " " (cont.) | 141—142 |
| XXXI. " " (concl'd.) | 142—143 |
| XXXII. The Disciple and Non-Resist- ance | 143—144 |
| XXXIII. " " (cont.) | 145—146 |
| XXXIV. " " (concl'd.) | 146—147 |
| XXXV. The Disciple and God's Word... | 148—149 |
| XXXVI. " " (cont.) | 149—151 |
| XXXVII. The Disciple must Love all Men. | 151—153 |
| XXXVIII. " " (concl'd.) | 153—154 |
| XXXIX. The Disciple and Brotherly Love | 154—157 |

| | <i>Page</i> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Study | |
| XL. The Disciple and Forgiveness ... | 157—158 |
| XLI. " " (cont.) ... | 159—160 |
| XLII. The Disciple under Persecution. | 160—162 |
| XLIII. " " (cont.) ... | 162—163 |
| XLIV. The Disciple and the Spread of the Kingdom | 164—166 |
| XLV. " " (cont.) ... | 166—167 |
| XLVI. " " (concl'd.) | 167—169 |

CHAPTER VII

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------|---------|
| THE TEACHING OF JESUS ABOUT THE CHURCH | 169—178 |
| I. The Character of the Church ... | 169—171 |
| II. The Church—(cont.) | 171—173 |
| III. " " (cont.) | 173—175 |
| IV. " " (cont.) | 175—177 |
| V. " " (concl'd.) | 177—178 |

CHAPTER VIII

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| JESUS' TEACHING CONCERNING SATAN AND THE POWERS OF EVIL | 178—183 |
| I. The Power of Evil Spirits ... | 178—180 |
| II. Devil-Possession | 180—181 |
| III. Jesus and Satan | 182—183 |

CHAPTER IX

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| JESUS' TEACHING ABOUT THE FUTURE ... | 183—194 |
| I. Resurrection and Immortality ... | 183—185 |
| II. The Future of the Godly ... | 185—186 |
| III. " " (cont.) ... | 186—188 |
| IV. " " (concl'd.) ... | 188—190 |
| V. The Future of the Wicked ... | 190—192 |
| VI. " " (cont.) ... | 192—194 |

THE TEACHING OF JESUS OUR LORD

INTRODUCTION

JESUS is the greatest of all teachers. It is as true to-day, as it was nineteen centuries ago, that "never man spake as this man." All men of learning to-day hold His words in the highest esteem. His teaching has done more to purify and to elevate thought in this world than that of any other teacher of whatever land or age; even as His life has been the supreme power in exalting the life of man.

In India, at the present time, the study of our Lord's words is most opportune. The educated men of India, to-day, because they hold Him in highest esteem, are increasingly eager to know what He taught. They care little what the Apostles may have said; but their lofty ideas concerning Jesus, the Christ, make a study of His words a matter of paramount importance to them. Inasmuch as the question, "What think ye of Christ?" is the leading interrogation of India, to-day, it is of vital importance that men should have an opportunity to know exactly what Jesus said and taught.

Never before in the history of Christianity, were the words of Jesus studied so eagerly and examined so thoroughly and valued so supremely by Christian scholars, as at the present day. In former centuries it was the Apostolic teaching, and, more especially, the teaching of the Apostle Paul, that found precedence

and power in the directing of Christian thought and in the shaping of Christian doctrine. To-day the emphasis has been transferred from the words of Paul to those of Jesus. Men are inquiring to-day, not so much what Paul and his fellow Apostles said in reference to certain matters of Christian thought, as what our Lord uttered concerning the same things.

It is well that men should *hark* back to Christ. He is the Fountain-head of our Faith; and His words must remain the key-words to every doctrine of Christianity. This change of emphasis has, during the last half century, largely modified Christian belief and greatly affected Christian doctrine. In order to know Christianity we must know thoroughly the Christ. "He is the everlasting and sunlit mountain up which our thoughts must climb. . . . He is at once the basis and source of the Christian religion. He made it, He is it, . . . the better we know Him, the better we know our Faith, He who best knows Christ is the best Christian"* And if we are to know Him, it is of prime importance that we study and know well His words.

I. THE SOURCES OF THE TEACHING OF JESUS.

These are few—only the four Gospels. There doubtless were current, in the first century, many of His sayings, which are not included in these Gospels. Some of these have been recently discovered in ancient manuscripts.

But our dependence is upon the Gospels. Two of these do not claim to have been written by His Apostles. And yet all were prepared by loving disciples who

* Dr. Fairbairn.

were conversant, at first or second hand, with all the facts they narrate and with all His words which they have transcribed.

These Gospels are divided into two classes:—

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke are usually called “the Synoptics,” because they give brief records of the life of our Lord from the same standpoint. They give the outer, historical, aspect; and, in the main, include only His Galilean ministry. The Gospel of John, on the other hand, emphasizes rather the divine than the human aspect of the Christ. This Gospel also presents five visits of our Lord to Jerusalem and makes Judea the principal scene of His ministry.

The former are sometimes called the “Bodily Gospels,” while the latter is named the “Spiritual Gospel.” In the first three we find our Lord’s addresses to the multitude emphasized, while in John His addresses to the inner circle of disciples find prominence. In the Johannean Gospel we have an early confession by Jesus of His Messiahship, while in the Synoptics this confession is withheld from the public until the last days.

They differ also in their method of quoting our Lord’s language, the Synoptics quoting His words literally, while John gives largely their substance in his own language.

So great is the difference between the Synoptics and John that many Christian writers, at present, contend that the last mentioned was not written by the “Beloved Disciple,” but by a later Christian of that name. Moreover, their testimony is in some respects so different that it is usual to quote them as

separate evidences in the discussion of the Life and Teaching of our Lord. In our study, however, we shall not make this division of evidence, save when it is noticeable and requires separate treatment.

Not one of these Gospels is a history, or was intended to be a history, of our Lord. They are mere fragments of a history—a number of separate sketches, all written with a tendency or a purpose, as expressed in John xx. 31—"that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in His name."

There are minor differences and according to present light a very few discrepancies found in the Gospels. Yet, on the whole, they produce a remarkable picture of Him. And the fact that four independent writers should look at Him each from His own peculiar view point and personal bias, adds much to the fulness, clearness, attractiveness and interest of the picture presented of Him. This four-fold vision of the Christ is much more interesting, helpful and inspiring than a single picture could possibly have been.

And the very fact that a few unlearned men should, without collusion, write such fragments as these, which have, for eighteen centuries, fascinated the world and given a divine and perfect picture of the Saviour of mankind is rightly regarded as indubitable evidence that they were written under the guidance of God's Spirit.

II. THE GENERAL CHARACTER OF OUR LORD'S TEACHING.

As we study His words in the Gospels we are impressed by a few interesting facts.

1. His teaching was oral. Jesus never wrote a book, a tract, or a sermon. We only once read of His having written, and He then wrote upon the ground (John viii. 6). And yet He taught with the assurance that His words would abide. "Heaven and earth shall pass away but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. xxiv. 35). "It was evidently no part of His purpose to give His instruction in a stereotyped form. His profoundest and most striking sayings were often uttered upon a chance meeting with some stranger; His inimitable parables were spoken to little groups at the way side, or by the lake shore.....Did any other public teacher ever adopt so strange a course? Was there ever such carelessness of results, such apparent waste of effort?.....It was evident that Jesus was bent upon lodging living truths in the heart of humanity, and He knew that He could best do this, not by the methods of the Scribes and the School, but by that personal, firsthand, contact with men, by that vital touch of mind and heart, through which alone one personality can communicate its treasures to another. Hence, Jesus chose the vital, personal, method of teaching." He felt that His business was to write His truth and His life, not on the leaves of books, but on the tables of the twelve hearts which He chose to be His special witnesses and messengers to the world. "Ye are our epistles, known and read of all men," was not only the Apostolic declaration (2 Cor. iii. 2), but was also the conviction and purpose of our Lord.

Thus, like the Indian Buddha of old, but unlike those other great religious leaders—Moses, Muhammad, and Confucious—Jesus left no writings behind Him, even though writing was a known art in His time.

He well knew that better than to convey His thoughts through printed page was it to impart them through the living voice to the disciples who would thrill the world by His message, coloured by their own mind and transfigured by their own enthusiasm.

2. He taught both with graciousness and severity.

To sinful men, who felt and confessed their depravity and who sought salvation, He was supremely gracious. Listen to His tender words—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. xi. 28). "Daughter, be of good cheer" (Matt. ix. 22). "Fear not, little flock" (Luke xii. 32). "O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem," etc. (Matt. xxiii. 37).

And, yet, when He met hardened hypocrites, He was terribly severe. Language hardly contains more severity than is found in those words of our Lord to the hollow-lived Pharisees. "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees" (Matt. xxiii. 13). "Ye offspring of vipers" (Matt. xxiii. 33). "Ye are like unto whited sepulchres" (Matt. xxiii. 27). "Ye children of the devil" (John viii. 44). He knew how to express the most burning denunciation, and never hesitated when the opportunity came to use such language.

Even to His own disciples, He found occasions when strong language was necessary. "Get thee behind me, Satan" (Matt. xvi. 23), were His words to the disciple who tempted Him. "One of you is a devil" (John vi. 70), was His way of referring to Judas. Of the lost He saith, "their worm dieth not" (Mark ix. 48).

John the Baptist was a man of unmixed severity; he used words of terrible denunciation to sinners of all classes. Jesus on the other hand mingled with His

severity unspeakable tenderness and kindness. He never wounded save where a wound was necessary for the soul; and then He never hesitated.

3. His teaching was centred in Himself. All that He taught found realization in Himself. There was not a truth in His religion whose source and exemplification He did not find in Himself. "I am the way, the truth and the life" (John xiv. 6). "I am the bread of life" (John vi. 35). "I am the light of the world" (John viii. 12). "I am the resurrection and the life" (John xi. 25). "He that believeth in me, though he die, yet shall he live" (John xi. 25).

He knew and ever taught that He Himself was the substance, as He was the fulfilment, of all that He taught. He was the living incarnation of His eternal words of wisdom. Hence the divine majesty of His words.

4. He also taught with authority. Herein lay the difference between His words and those of the Scribes (Mark i. 22). The Scribes quoted authority for everything; and their chief business was to interpret the words of ancient masters. Our Lord taught merely with an "I say unto you" (see Matt. vi). He cited no other man's opinions, but spoke with the sure conviction born of divine wisdom and of perfect familiarity with the truth which He taught. He knew, from His divine wisdom and from His heavenly experience, all truth and needed no other authority outside of Himself. How often does He preface His teaching with the familiar words—"Verily, verily I say unto you." This double divine certainty gave confidence to all in His utterance. He possessed a calm assumption of His right to teach. He hesitated not to elaborate, to change,

and even to repeal Mosaic laws (see Matt. v. and Mark x. 1-12).

5. His teaching was not systematic or scientific in form. How unlike the sermon of to-day is the Sermon on the Mount! No divisions and sub-divisions, no scientific arrangement, apparently. And yet His words were not without order. It was not the outward form or order, but rather the inner method of life and the special need of those whom He addressed. The nature of the occasion and the peculiar human need which confronted Him at the time were the key to the arrangement of the substance of His addresses. Literary forms, as such, He eschewed and spoke from the fullness of a loving heart to lost men.

6. He always adapted His words to His hearers. His teaching was never guilty of irrelevance. One has only to study His words to the cultured, but proud and hollow, Pharisees to see how His every word was an arrow aimed at their double life. He enjoined upon Nicodemus, the timid yet haughty child of Abraham, that He must be born from above (John iii). Listen to His charming and appropriate words to the woman at the well (John iv); or read His wonderful address to the disciples in the "Upper Room" (John xiv. 16). His remarks were always *apropos* to the occasion and calculated to stir up thought and conviction in those addressed.

7. His speech abounded in apt illustration and forcible parable.

He was wont to fortify His words by examples. See His teaching on non-resistance (Matt. v. 39-41). His teaching about alms, prayer and fasting was also illumined by telling illustration (Matt. vi. 1-18).

His illustrations were apt and came from His abundant observation of nature and of history. Note His frequent reference to the seed, to flowers, birds, etc. (Luke xii. 6), also to manifold and common social relations—the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, the Widow's Mite, and the Publican and Pharisee praying.

The parable was our Lord's favourite form of illustration. By it He illumined deep spiritual truths by comparing them with outward and well known things. These parables cover nearly the whole gamut of human life and experience. He used this form of instruction mostly in the latter part of His ministry, having learned by experience its effectiveness and helpfulness—for the double avowed purpose of aiding the docile and sincere to understand the truths of His Kingdom, and of hiding the same from the carping critic and the ever-watchful enemy.

8. Moreover, He generally taught with reserve, as men were able to receive His message. He did not believe that a teacher should "cast pearls before swine" (Matt. vii. 6). "I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now" were His words to His disciples even at the close of His ministry (John xvi. 12). With what wonderful reserve did He hold back His Messianic claim! Men were not ready to receive that great truth and fact before they had been instructed, for a long time, in the Kingdom itself. Until then He wished to be known as the Son of Man. Many a time He told the people and the disciples to refrain from publishing Him and His works. In view of the ignorance of the people and the dull spiritual apprehension of the disciples the Lord had to dole out

the truths of His Kingdom with a remarkable reservation which appears throughout the Gospels.

III. THE CONNECTION OF CHRIST'S TEACHING WITH THE OLD TESTAMENT.

It must not be supposed that the teaching of our Lord was, in its substance, an entirely new thing. He made no revelation of a new truth; it was His glory rather to give new emphasis to old and half-forgotten truths; while many truths which had been over-emphasized he relegated to the back-ground. In His instruction our Lord stands definitely upon Old Testament teaching. He constantly quotes Old Testament passages as of divine authority; and He frequently uses His authority to emphasize the deliverances of the ancient prophets of Israel. In addressing the Samaritan woman, He distinctly says, as any Jew would say, "We worship that which we know; for salvation is from the Jews" (John iv. 22). Thus, in many respects He appeared as a Jew among Jews, enforcing, as with heavenly authority, Jewish Scriptures. It was, in no sense, His purpose to establish a new faith.

His teaching was rather the fulfilling of that which had been taught in a more elementary form under the Jewish dispensation. In the infancy of Israel God had imparted His truth in a form suited to its untrained childhood. For many centuries God had added lesson to lesson and given line upon line to His people until they had developed almost into national manhood.

The coming of Christ brought into Israel and to all men the highest lessons of religion. He seized upon the most spiritual instructions of ancient prophecy and added new light and gave right perspective to them.

To some of the old and half buried, but fundamental, truths of the Old Testament He gave right prominence and a true relationship in His faith. For example, God was represented as the Father, in the Old Testament. But this doctrine was largely overshadowed by His sovereignty and power. Jesus changed the emphasis and subordinated His sovereignty and all else to His fatherhood. His special work was to reveal Him not as the sovereign King but as the loving Father who is in heaven.

The kingdom of God was a much emphasized Old Testament idea. But, in later Jewish times, the conception was debased, so that it referred to an earthly kingdom of wordly pomp and power. Jesus corrected the idea and restored to it its spiritual significance to which He gave exclusive emphasis.

In the Old Testament, faith was a national, a distinctly Jewish, thing; in the New it was on the one hand an eminently individual thing—a matter of each soul with God,—while on the other it was a definite relationship of God with the whole human race.

In the Old, the Spirit of God moved among all the people; in the New His efforts are largely exercised for the individual soul (John iv. 14).

So our Lord said, in reference to the Jewish Scriptures, that He came not to destroy but to fulfil (Matt. v. 17). That is, He came to give right emphasis and a right perspective to all the truths of the Old Testament.

All the germs of a perfect faith are in the Jewish Scriptures. But they needed the Christ for their highest fulfilment, and in order to give to each truth its right place in the universal religion. And this is

what Jesus accomplished, and this is His attitude toward the ancient Jewish religion. So great a work was never accomplished on earth by any other person.

IV. WHAT WAS THE ATTITUDE OF JESUS TOWARDS THE RELIGIOUS TEACHERS OF HIS DAY ?

It was partly an attitude of sympathy and also partly one of antipathy.

1. When He came upon earth John the Baptist was the leading religious instructor of the day. Among the host of Jewish Rabbis, his was the only prophetic voice to be heard in that land. Jesus began His ministry as a disciple of John. He sought baptism at his hands. He took His first disciples from among the followers of John. John was the last of the Old Testament prophets. But he was more than a prophet of the Old Dispensation. He was the connecting link between the Old and the New. While not really of the New, he nevertheless looked forward to the New Dispensation and had the honour of preparing men for the kingdom of God and its King.

John had little in common with the religious classes of the day—the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes. He invited all alike to enter His own covenant of life through a rite which was not unknown to the Jews. The Jews, like the Brahmans, were much given to washings (Mark vii. 3-4). John called upon all to accept the rite of baptism—a rite which signified repentance; and this meant both the renunciation of their past life (Mark i. 4), and also a forgiveness of sins. It also had a forward look; and as such was an initiation into the new *preparanda* class for the Kingdom of Christ.

The preaching of John was of a severe type, and threatened punishment and judgment upon the incorrigible. This repentance which he enjoined was not an outward form, but a thing of the heart.

In this way John prepared the people for the Christ; and, moreover, anticipated the new baptism of the Spirit (Luke iii. 16), which it was the special purpose of Christ to introduce.

John regarded Jesus as the Messiah, after he had baptized Him (John i. 33). Of Him he said,—“I must decrease but He must increase.”

Moreover, he pointed to Jesus as “The lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world” (John i. 29).

Jesus therefore looked with full sympathy upon John as His own forerunner, and spoke of him as the greatest of those born of women, while yet not a member of the new kingdom, or a recipient of its highest wisdom and privilege (Matt. xi. 11).

2. But the Lord's attitude towards the popular teachers of His day—the Scribes and the Pharisees—was one of constant opposition and disgust. He had nothing to learn from them, because they had lost the grain of truth entrusted to them, and were satisfied with the husk only. They were extreme formalists and hypocrites of the grossest kind. Hence, the Lord not only conceived for them the greatest aversion; He also found in them His ever-present accusers and most implacable foes.

And yet even from the teaching of these, His enemies, Jesus did not refuse to adopt certain ideas. The doctrine of the Resurrection and of the Final Judgment and of the abode of departed Spirits as divided into Abraham's Bosom on the one side, and

Gehenna on the other, were such as Christ could take; though He had to separate them from gross materialistic ideas and to breathe into them His own spiritual interpretation.

CHAPTER I

JESUS' TEACHING CONCERNING HIMSELF

STUDY I

The Fullness of Time

"What think ye of Christ?" This is the greatest question ever propounded to man. To know Christ is the greatest knowledge, even eternal life. Jesus is anxious that all men should know Him. "Who do men say that the Son of Man is?"* (Matt. xvi. 13.) The best and the only sure way to know Christ is by learning what He has said about Himself. Better than even apostolic words concerning Jesus are the words of Jesus Himself as He reveals Himself to the world.

Jesus revealed Himself fully to men only in the "fullness of time." As we have seen, He exercised great reserve in this matter. Only at the end of His ministry did He openly avow Himself as the Christ. We are told that "He suffered not the demons to speak because they knew Him" (Mark i. 34). And He charged the disciples also that they should tell no man of Him. (Mark viii. 30; see also Mark iii. 12; v. 43; vii. 36.)

* All Scripture quotations in this book follow the American Revised Version.

Late in His ministry we find that He was regarded as only a prophet by the multitudes (Mark viii. 27, 28).

This reserve was not caused by a sense of modesty in Jesus; there was a definite reason for it. The Jews were expecting the Messiah, but had false conceptions concerning Him. In Him they expected an earthly king. It was first necessary that Christ should teach them the true nature of the Kingdom and of His Kingship. Otherwise they would have taken Him by force to be their king; and this would have led to His premature death. This, indeed, they were about to do after He had fed the five thousand; but He frustrated their plans (John vi. 15).

At the end of His public ministry when His work was about completed, and when reserve was no longer needed, He made a public confession of His Messiahship.

In this matter, as in others, the Gospel of John seems to differ somewhat strikingly from the Synoptics. In the very first chapter (vss. 29-51) His Messiahship seems clearly announced. "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," says the Baptist, pointing to Jesus as He approaches Him. "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art King of Israel" is Nathanael's noble confession. In the third chapter (vss. 16-21) the Christ seems to announce Himself, if indeed these words be His and not the writer's.

How unreservedly He announces His Messiahship to the woman of Samaria, as He was, upon His journey, to enter upon His campaign of work in Galilee! (ch. iv. 26.) "I that speak unto thee am He," was the remarkable expression which revealed His Kingship

to this outcast woman. And from that expression and His subsequent instruction came, to the despised Samaritans, the conviction that "This is indeed the Saviour of the world" (vs. 42). And with equal clearness and much tenderness He broke the same news to him that had been blind and had become an outcast from the temple (ix. 35-38).

These expressions certainly impress us as being out of character with the reserve manifested concerning His Messiahship in the early part of the Synoptics.

MEDITATION

Jesus came in the fullness of time after many centuries of preparation. And yet the world rejected Him. The fullness of God's plans must still wait for the fullness of a man's willingness to accept. What think ye of Christ?

STUDY II

The Synoptics and John Harmonized

Still, we should remember, in reference to these Johannean passages, that these announcements are not made to the public, but to private individuals and to His inner circle of friends. And this may be in harmony with His general purpose of concealment.

It should also be noted that this avowal was almost wholly confined to the Judean ministry, where the Jews were supposed to know better than the Galileans the true nature of His Messiahship. In Judea were men learned in the Scriptures and in messianic and prophetic allusions; while they of Galilee were entirely unlearned in the Word of God. One would naturally expect, therefore, that His silence in Galilee, might

be broken in Judea, the narrative of which ministry finds chief place in the Johannean Gospel.

Consider also the temper of the Galileans, how impulsive they were and how quick to carry into execution any worldly thought of power which they might possess concerning the Christ. John himself refers to this difference (vi. 14-15).

It should not be forgotten, however, that the Fourth Gospel also reveals evidences of reserve in connection with the announcement of His Messiahship. It is in this Gospel that we are told (iii. 23) that the Baptist continued his preaching without interruption after meeting and baptizing Jesus. One might have expected that John, having learned whom he was baptizing, and therefore realizing that the Messiah had already come and was entering upon His ministry, would have, there and then, proclaimed his allegiance to the Christ, given up his work and followed Him. Here we are told that he did nothing of the kind.

In this same Gospel (x. 24), we are informed that the Jews of Jerusalem, late in His ministry, were impatient because of the doubt which still be-clouded them concerning Him. "How long dost Thou hold us in suspense? If Thou art the Christ, tell us plainly." If they had regarded Him as the Messiah, they could not have asked this question.

MEDITATION

Think of the wonderful self-restraint required by our Lord in this reserve concerning His own character and the object of His mission!

We need to be anointed that we may adequately know the Anointed One.

STUDY III

The Messiah

In the fulness of time Jesus proclaimed Himself as the Messiah, or the Christ. *Messiah* is the Hebrew word, and *Christ* is the Greek word, meaning "the anointed one." See Him in the last stage of His public ministry as He enters the sacred capital of the Jews, publicly assuming and allowing His disciples to publicly proclaim and honour Him as King. "Blessed is the King that cometh in the name of the Lord, peace in heaven and glory in the highest." And to the complaining Pharisees He merely replied, "If these shall hold their peace, the stones will cry out" (Luke xix. 29-40). And in the final moment of the apparent triumph of His enemies, when the High Priest held Him as prisoner and sought to secure from Him self-criminating evidence, He was asked, "Art Thou the Christ the Son of the blessed?" Jesus said, "I am; and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of Heaven" (Mark xiv. 61-62). This public declaration of His kingship and of His royal prerogatives was to His enemies an adequate reason for condemning Him to death; and it led Pilate to place above the head of the crucified Redeemer, the significant words,—*"The King of the Jews."* Thus, however much on grounds of policy He may have concealed His Messiahship during the early part of His ministry, He closed that same ministry in full announcement of His claims and died at the hands of men as the Christ of God and the King of the Jews.

What does this name and title signify? To the Jews it meant the same as the 'Son of David' (Matt. xxii.

42; Mark x. 47). They expected the Messiah to come and sit upon the throne of His father, David, and to rule in Jerusalem, bringing all His and their enemies into subjection unto Himself, and ruling His people in equity and righteousness.

Jesus, however, regarded His Kingdom as a spiritual one. He knew and taught that His Kingdom was over the hearts, rather than the bodies, of men. He claimed to be the Christ, anointed to His divine office by the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

He never repudiated the title when it was given to Him by others. Whether it was the call of blind Bartimeus (Mark x. 47-49), or whether it was the confession of His disciples, He never rejected the name. As He stood before Pilate He directly asserted it (Mark xv. 2).

MEDITATION

What are we doing to prepare India to accept Jesus as Messiah? God's best blessings avail only to those who can apprehend them. The eyes of the Jews were to the earth, and the great vision of heaven passed by them unseen.

STUDY IV

The Son of Man

He was also the Son of Man (Matt. ix. 6; xii. 8). This title was His own chosen and beloved designation. It is used by Him of Himself one hundred and eight times in the Gospels. And yet it was never used of Him by any one of His contemporaries, save in one instance, when His enemies take, as it were, the word out of His own mouth (John xii. 34). The only disciple that uses the name is Stephen at his martyrdom (Acts vii. 56).

Generally speaking, this title, Son of Man, is used in the Synoptics, while Son of God is the favourite term of the Johannean Gospel.

The term is used in the Old Testament. It is a favourite expression in Ezekiel (Ezek. ii. 1; iii. 1, etc.), and there it usually signifies human frailty. The Psalmist (Psalm viii. 4) uses the term with very much the same meaning. In the prophecy of Daniel (vii. 13) the term conveys the meaning of dignity and glory.

This name must have had, for Jesus, specially precious significance. He did not intend to proclaim, through it, His Messiahship. It rather suited His purpose to conceal this fact from the people. At least the very ambiguity of the term suited admirably His purpose in the use of it, and kept the people in suspense as to His divine origin.

MEDITATION

Jesus delighted in revealing His manhood more than His Godhead. Men repudiated Him, but He still claimed to be one of our race. He became the Son of Man that He might make His human kin the true Sons of God.

STUDY V

The Significance of this Name

The expression may be said to convey three distinct ideas:—

(a) The reality of His humanity and the closeness of His connection with all human beings. He is the Son of *Man*, born of a *Woman*. He came not only like a man, with the form of humanity upon Him; He was verily a *part* of our human race, a *true* member of our humanity. The name thus revealed His

lowliness. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head" (Matt. viii. 20). "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. xx. 28). This, perhaps, is the most characteristic meaning of the term; and it was dear to Him as it is above all others sweet to Christians, because it identifies Him with us and makes Him a real part of our race.

(b) He was *the* Son of Man. Note the article and the emphasis which it bears. He was not an ordinary Son of Man. He stands in a unique place. Though one of us, yet He stands above us. His whole life, in its sinless perfection, in its humble service, in its absolute self-forgetfulness, points to Him as *the* Son of Man—the One who is extraordinary and who stands supreme as the Exemplar of our race.

(c) Sometimes the name conveys dignity and power; for did not the Lord know the use of the name in the prophecy of Daniel? After that prophetic use of that holy name He also connects it with the highest glory. "For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then shall He render unto every man according to his deeds" (Matt. xvi. 27). "Woe unto that man through whom the Son of Man is betrayed" (Matt. xxvi. 24). "The Son of Man hath authority to forgive sins" (Matt. ix. 6). "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath" (Matt. xii. 8).

Whatever meaning our Lord Himself may have given to the name, Son of Man, it was evidently not understood by the people to refer to Messianic claims; for they did not regard Him as the Messiah.

MEDITATION

See in the lowliness of Jesus His supreme greatness. By becoming the Son of Man He revealed the possibilities of all the sons of men.

O Saviour Christ, Thou too art Man,
Thou hast been troubled, tempted, tried;
Thy kind but searching glance can scan
The very wounds that shame would hide.

STUDY VI

The Son of God

He was also the Son of God.

This title is not explicitly used by our Lord of Himself in the Synoptics. Nevertheless, in the Gospel of Matthew alone He refers to God as His "Father" twenty-one times. Listen especially to that wonderful prayer—"I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes; yea, Father, for so it was well pleasing in Thy sight." "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father" (Matt. xi. 25-27; Luke x. 21-22). How beautiful the intimacy revealed by this expression! and how boldly does He express thus His relationship to God!

In the Synoptics, also, Jesus often heard this title applied to Himself and accepted it. During His baptism the Father speaks of Him as "My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. iii. 17). Even the devils exclaimed, "What have we to do with Thee, Thou Son of God" (Matt. viii. 29). The frightened disciples in the boat worshipped Him, saying, "Of a truth Thou art the Son of God" (Matt. xiv. 33).

In the Gospel of John our Lord uses the title of Himself. "The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live" (v. 25; see also x. 36; xi. 4). He calls God His Father more than one hundred times. In reference to this claim of the Lord, the Synoptics widely differ from John. In the former the message is allowed to conceal the Messenger; while, in the latter, the Messenger finds prominence and everywhere stands clearly in the front.

This term, "Son of God," doubtless carries within itself the sense of equality with God. It was evidently so regarded by Christ's enemies. Jesus said, "My Father worketh even until now, and I work." "For this cause therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He called God His own Father making Himself equal with God" (John v. 17-18; see also x. 30-33).

MEDITATION

A Son of Man who is not also the Son of God cannot avail as Saviour of man. Because He is of heaven and of earth, He can save to the uttermost.

His so-called blasphemy of twenty centuries ago is the glory and boast of Christendom to-day.

STUDY VII

Our Lord's Limitations

And yet, in the fourth Gospel, Jesus often refers to His own limitations.

He tells us that He was sent by the Father and therefore came not of His own initiative (v. 37). He says that His message of truth was that which He

had heard and received from God. He spoke not His own thoughts, merely (viii. 40). He, moreover, emphatically declared that His works were given Him to do by the Father. "Verily, verily I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing; for what things soever He doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner" (v. 19-30). "I am come down from Heaven not to do Mine own will but the will of Him that sent Me" (vi. 38).

In the Synoptics references to His limitations abound. There we are told that His knowledge was limited (Mark xiii. 32). Also His authority (Mark x. 40). Likewise that He worked His miracles by God's Spirit (Matt. xii. 28; see also Luke xi. 20).

All these passages refer to His subordination to the Father. This doubtless means that which we may call an official subordination in carrying out the work of redemption.

And yet, doubtless, the title, "Son of God," is used by John to emphasize the divine character of our Lord. In this Gospel the divine Sonship finds frequent reference for the purpose of accentuating the divine nature which John, perhaps better than any other apostle, was able to see and appreciate in Him.

MEDITATION

What is the lesson to us of Christ's dependence upon the Father? The deepest mystery and the chiefest glory of the Gospel lies here.

He who created the worlds was cradled in Bethlehem!

He who fed the multitude hungered!

The blessed God agonizing in Gethsemane and dying on the cross!

STUDY VIII

The Eternal Son

In the fourth Gospel, our Lord is also represented as the "Eternal Son." In the opening words of the Gospel He is described as "The Eternal Word which was God." In the beginning all things were made through Him. Jesus taught that He was from above, and therefore existed before He came to the world (viii. 23). He declared that he had come down from heaven and would return to heaven. "No one hath ascended into heaven but he that descended out of heaven, even the Son of Man who is in heaven" (iii. 13). Our Lord frequently refers to his own pre-existence. "And, now, Father, glorify Me with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was" (xvii. 5). "What then," He said to the Jews, "if ye should behold the Son of man ascending where He was before?" (vi. 62). In one of His conflicts with the Jews, He declared emphatically, "Before Abraham was born, I am" (viii. 56-58). And with equal clearness He said unto His disciples,—“I came out from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world, and go unto the Father” (xvi. 28-30).

In the Synoptics there are no direct statements of the pre-existence of Christ, though there are passages which imply this great doctrine. There is no doubt that our Lord was conscious of His eternal union with God and that He was co-eternal with the Father.

"The eternal Sonship of Jesus is not a doctrine of merely intellectual interest. Who Jesus was—on this depends our thought of God, the most vital thought in our moral and spiritual life. If Jesus be the eternal Son, then how grand an act of condescension was it

for Him to be sent into the world! In Jesus we have God as it were translated into human speech."

MEDITATION

Why did Jesus glory in His consciousness of a former eternal existence? Think of the brief earthly life of Christ as a small island washed by the waves of two eternal seas.

Christ's divinity and eternity are two aspects of one thought.

STUDY IX

The Sinless One

He was conscious of His sinlessness. In this He was separated from men.

The apostles doubtless considered Him to be sinless. They all thought of Him as being different from themselves in that He was the immaculate One.

(a) He never made any confession of sin. Study carefully His prayers in the Gospels. It is in their prayers that men humble themselves before God, confessing their sins, and imploring His forgiveness. Jesus taught men that confession was an essential part of prayer. In the prayer which He taught His disciples to pray, "forgive us our debts" is an important petition. Through the beautiful parable of the Pharisee and the Publican He taught us the supreme importance of humble confession of sin as being of the very essence and excellence of prayer (Luke xviii. 9-14). All true men feel and confess their unworthiness before God—the more deep their confession, the better we think they are.

But Jesus gives no intimation, and utters no word expressive of guilt or of His alienation from God (see Luke x. 21-22; John xi. 41-42). And, more

especially study His sublime prayer of intercession (John xvii). In vain do we seek there for the first breath of confession of sin.

Or, look at the account of His temptations in the wilderness (Matt. iv. 1-11). Jesus must have narrated this experience of conflict with the evil one to His disciples. But in this narrative, found in two Gospels, we have no intimation of His yielding, at any point, to the attacks of the devil. It was a victory from beginning to end; He kept His soul unsullied in this great conflict with sin. Whether we look at the first as a temptation to a selfish use of the power given Him; or consider the second temptation, that He take a short cut to popularity; or note the third, and most vehement temptation, of a short cut to success—not one leaves the taint of suspicion upon Him. He came out victorious and pure from this three-fold test, and entered upon His ministry with a pure and strong consciousness of His integrity and holiness.

MEDITATION

Why must a sinner's Saviour be a sinless Saviour?

Consider the great gulf which, in this particular, separates Christ from all Hindu incarnations.

Though victorious over Satan He knew his wiles and felt his power so that He can sympathize with the tempted believer and help him.

STUDY X

The Sinless One—(continued).

He calls Himself the final Judge of humanity (Matt. xiii. 41-42). He who is to be the Judge of all men and is to condemn every unforgiven sinner,

must Himself be free from sin. The very first condition and qualification for judgeship is that one should not be guilty of violating the law concerning which he judges the action of others.

Even more than this, His wonderful claim to be the forgiver of sins bears testimony to His sinlessness. Imagine a man who, himself, was a sinner standing in the presence of sinners and exclaiming, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. xi. 28). It would be worse than mockery for such a man to pronounce forgiveness upon well known sinners as Jesus did upon several occasions (Mark ii. 10). And yet, no one, since the Pharisees of old, has ever seen any incongruity in this act of our Lord as the Sin-forgiver.

And, above all, Jesus made definite claim to sinlessness. On one occasion He confronted His enemies and definitely asked them, "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" (John viii. 46). Doubtless many who heard Him utter those words knew Him well, and of these not a few would have been only too glad to respond by calling attention to some flaw in His character or to some sin that disfigured His life. But, in the presence of His challenge, they were all dumb. Well could He afford to say unto His disciples, later on, "I will no more speak much with you, for the Prince of the world cometh; and he hath nothing in Me" (John xiv. 30). Satan, had, doubtless, tempted Him more than he had tempted any other human being; but he had "nothing" in Christ, Our Lord never gave him the first opportunity for triumph, because every temptation fell upon His well-defended and ever vigilant soul.

MEDITATION

Had Christ yielded once to the tempter, how would it have affected His claim to be a Saviour?

Our Lord's challenge to His enemies to convict Him of sin has stood unaccepted for two millenniums and is a perennial joy to penitent sinners.

He knows our infirmities but has shown to us that we need not indulge them, or yield to them.

STUDY XI**The Final Judge**

He is the final Judge of all men.

It is wonderful that He who came into the world and was judged and condemned by men should again return as the supreme Judge of all. Jesus frequently manifested His consciousness of that authority which had been given to Him to be the final Judge of the world.

In the Sermon on the Mount this fact is assumed. "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by Thy name, and by Thy name cast out demons, and by Thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me ye that work iniquity" (Matt. vii. 21-23). In these words we feel as if we were looking upon the supreme Judge of all human character as He sits upon His throne.

In the parable of the tares, Jesus teaches this doctrine more explicitly (Matt. xiii. 36-43). It is the Son of Man who shall send forth His angels to separate the good from the evil, and to mete out reward unto all according to their deeds (Matt. xvi. 27).

Surrounded by an innumerable heavenly host, and seated upon the clouds, He will appear as the very incarnation of divine power and heavenly glory to perform this work.

MEDITATION

He who will judge at the last day, is He not judging your every act daily?

O Lord and Master of us all!
Whate'er our name or sign,
We own Thy sway, we hear Thy call,
We test our lives by Thine.

Thou judgest us; Thy purity
Doth all our lusts condemn;
The love that draws us nearer Thee
Is hot with wrath to them.

Our thoughts lie open to Thy sight;
And, naked to Thy glance,
Our secret sins are in the light
Of Thy pure countenance.

Jesus came to sow the seed of life. He will again come to gather His wheat into His garner.

STUDY XII

The Final Judge—(continued).

But it is in the great parable of the future, spoken by our Lord that night on the Mount of Olives, (Matt. xxv. 31-46), that the chief glory of this transcendent event is poetically described. Herein also do we see many of the details of that Great Trial,—the basis of the judgment which shall be rendered as well as its universality, permanence, finality, and its results.

In His conduct, as universal Judge, is involved His omniscience. In the prophecy of Malachi (iii. 16) we read of the "Book of God's remembrance." It is a poetic expression for the omniscience of Him who is the sole and universal Judge of men's life and character.

As the Saviour of men, He has the ultimate right and authority over all men. He who came into the world to give life unto men has the right to judge men for their attitude toward that life. Or, more properly, the final judgment which He will execute will be based upon their reception or non-reception of Himself who is both the source of life and of judgment. Nothing then is more appropriate than that the Saviour Himself should be the Judge of all who come within the range of His saving power.

In the Gospel of John there is further light thrown upon this consciousness of Jesus, namely,—

(a) That this judgment has been given to Him of the Father (John v. 21-22).

(b) That our Lord Himself hath within Himself life, and therefore possesseth the power to confer life upon whom He willeth in judgment (John v. 26-27).

(c) That this judgment will be rendered according to what men have done. "All that are in their tombs shall hear His voice and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment" (John v. 28-29).

(d) That this judgment will be based upon men's attitude towards Himself. "He that rejecteth Me and receiveth not My sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John xii. 48).

Even while upon earth our Lord evinced a wonderful perception of the human mind and intimacy with the deep working of human character, such as rendered Him capable of judging men (John ii. 24-25; also iv. 18-29). Witness also His familiarity with the working of Simon Peter's mind—a familiarity which goes deeper than Peter's own consciousness or perception (Luke xxii. 31-33).

MEDITATION

What judgment is being daily written in God's book of remembrance concerning your life?

The test of our life will be our deeds, the test of our deeds will be our love, the test of our love will be our faith in Christ. And He knows!

STUDY XIII

The Revealer of God

He knew that He was the Revealer of God.

The angel foretold to Joseph that His name should be Immanuel; which is, being interpreted, "God with us" (Matt. i. 21-23). He is the incarnate, the ever-present, self-manifesting God. The loving apostle writes that "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John i. 18). This is the peculiar function of Jesus—to reveal the Godhead. He was the "Word" (John i. 1), and as the Word He was, and is, the very expression of the deepest thought of the eternal Mind of God to man.

He claimed intimate relationship with the Father.

(a) That He came from the Father (John v. 37; vi. 57).

(b) That He alone knew the Father (John x. 14-15). "No one knoweth the Father save the Son and He to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him" (Matt. xi. 27-30; Luke x. 22).

(c) That He possessed the glory of the Father from the foundation of the world (John xvii. 5).

(d) That He was one with the Father (John xvii. 21; v. 17-18; xiv. 11).

(e) That He who hath seen Him hath seen the Father (John xiv. 9). To see Christ is to see the infinite God; and it is the only way in which we can see Him.

MEDITATION

To know God without a "Revealer" is impossible. The Hindu Vedantin and the Western Agnostic are right in saying that man's unaided light cannot penetrate the darkness which surrounds God. But through Jesus Christ God removed the curtain, came forth from the darkness and shone forth. Jesus is the "Word"—the very thought and life of God to us.

STUDY XIV

The Saviour of Men

He was conscious of being the Saviour of men.

He gave expression to this consciousness always and everywhere. Before His birth the angel proclaimed that they should call Him Jesus; "for it is He that shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. i. 21).

The Baptist announced the fact as Jesus approached him, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29).

Jesus declared the purpose of His incarnation in these words,—“The Son of Man came not to be ministered

unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. xx. 28).

Jesus knew that man was lost. He was estranged from the Father and was utterly incapable of coming to His own. Among the most precious words of grace and wisdom that ever fell from His lips were those three beautiful "Parables of the Lost"—the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Lost Son (Luke xv). Some have, with equal aptness, called them "The Parables of Salvation." In the first parable do we specially find portrayed the infinitely loving and patient work of God in Christ Jesus seeking to save the sinner. With unspeakable compassion He ignores all danger and seeks the lost soul until He finds it. And when He finds it, see with what joy He bears it upon His shoulders and calls together His friends for congratulation and festivity? "Even so there shall be joy in Heaven, over one sinner that repenteth." Jesus knew the hopeless degradation and helpless condition of man. He came filled with the divine passion of love, and sought him, found him, rescued him and gave him an inheritance in heaven that fadeth not away. He knew the joy which the salvation of such a sin-sodden, debauched soul created in the mansions above.

Add to this beautiful passage, another one of similar import and power—(John x. 1-29). Here again we have the picture of the Good Shepherd hesitating not to die for His sheep (vs. 11). He is the Good Shepherd who knows His own and is known by His own (vs. 14). No one has the power to snatch the human soul, rescued from its sin, out of the hand of this divine Saviour. "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them

out of My hand. My Father, who hath given them unto Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand" (vss. 28-29). Thus we see the double certainty of the full salvation of him who has been rescued by Jesus.

MEDITATION

Has Jesus wrought in you the peace of forgiveness, the assurance of salvation, the sweetness of cleansing, the power of victory over sin?

God's blessing came to the outcast "sinner" and to the hungry prodigal in rags. Despise not these lowest ones who shall be exalted to heaven by our Lord.

Our salvation is a life for a life. We live because He died.

STUDY XV

The Saviour of Men—(continued).

The miracles of healing, which He performed, were but the parables of the higher healing of the soul. The healing of the palsy was connected with the forgiving of the sick man's sins; yea more, one act was typical of the other, and, in an important sense, complementary of the other (Mark ii. 1-7). Every miracle of healing was corroborative evidence to His power to save souls.

He invited sinners to Himself for salvation. "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. xi. 28). "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink" (John vii. 37). "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out" (John vi. 37). Listen to His pathetic cry over His beloved Jerusalem,—“Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem,..... how often would I have gathered thy children together,

even as a hen gathereth her own brood under her wings, and ye would not " (Luke xiii. 34). Imagine Him in the infinite tenderness of His love, brooding over the millions of that great City and the surrounding country as He sat upon that spot of hallowed association—the Mount of Olives.

He also forgave sins. Not only in the case of the palsied man; note also the pathetic scene of His anointing by the woman who was a sinner, and yet who had felt the sweetness of His saving power within. Of her He says,—“Her sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much ” (Luke vii. 47).

MEDITATION

Does Jesus heal men's bodies to-day in answer to prayer ?

“The healing of His seamless dress

Is by our beds of pain;

We touch Him in life's throng and press,

And we are whole again.”

STUDY XVI

The Saviour as found in the Gospel of John

In the Gospel of John, His office as Saviour finds abundant illustration and emphasis. The peculiarity of the teaching of the fourth Gospel is that all the elements and blessings of salvation are found *in Him*.

The Father gave Him unto the world that He might bring unto it eternal life. And so He must be lifted up by His disciples even as the serpent of old was lifted up in the wilderness; that whosoever believeth in Him may have eternal life (John iii. 13-15).

He giveth the water of life that all who drink of it may thirst never more (John iv. 10, 14).

He Himself is the Bread and Water of Life (John vi. 35-40). He it is who has every power to feed and to nourish the believing soul.

He is the light of the world (John viii. 12). Out of the darkness of death, He brings the soul into the light of life, that light which is eternal life.

And He is also the resurrection and the life. His wonderful words to the sorrowing Martha have ever since brought infinite comfort to bereaved souls. "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on Me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die" (John xi. 25, 26). The doctrine of the resurrection not only was illustrated in Him; He was its source and is the hope and assurance of the same unto every child of God.

He also said, "I am the way, and the truth and the life" (John xiv. 6). It is through Him as the way, in Him as the eternal truth, and partaking of Him as the life of the soul, that men must for ever find a full salvation.

"Eternal Life" is the characteristic, and, I may almost say, the key-word of John's Gospel (John vi. 27). It is almost synonymous with the term "Kingdom of God." It is the God-implanted seed of life which will grow and expand throughout eternity. The Lord also describes it as the *abundant* life (John x. 10). Whatever the Lord giveth He giveth in abundant measure; and life, which is His chiefest gift, and which embodies nearly all else, He giveth abundantly, so abundantly, that it will spring up in the richness of all satisfying joy throughout eternity.

Thus, Jesus not only came to impart salvation; He

also came pre-eminently to impart Himself as the embodiment of a full and an everlasting salvation.

MEDITATION

"What is left for us save, in growth
Of soul, to rise up, far past both,
From the gift looking to the giver,
And from the cistern to the river;
And from the finite to infinity,
And from man's dust to God's divinity?"

Our religion is a religion of the present tense, first person singular. It is an eternal "I am."

STUDY XVII

His Death

Our Lord had a deep and an abiding conviction that His death on the cross had an essential and a very important part in the consummation of His work as Messiah and Saviour.

We know not when this consciousness took possession of Him; whether He was aware of it in His early boyhood days as, in loneliness, He wandered on the hills of Galilee above and around Nazareth. But we are quite sure that the shadow of the cross was upon Him from the day of His baptism until the end of His earthly life.

(a) The idea of a suffering Messiah was taught in the Old Testament. All the ancient sacrifices, especially the Paschal sacrifice and the elaborate ritual of the day of atonement (Lev. xvi), were pregnant with the idea of vicarious suffering. This idea found, perhaps, its most definite expression and most clear prophetic utterance in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah—that touching passage by which, several hundred years before the earthly days of Jesus, men were brought into the very presence

of the Cross of Christ and made to feel the pulsations of His divine suffering.

Nevertheless, the Jewish mind never seriously thought of the Messiah in this light. According to them He was to be a victorious, an ever-triumphant, Christ. "We have heard out of the Law, that the Christ abideth for ever; and how sayest thou the Son of Man must be lifted up?" (John xii. 34), was the confident interrogation of the Jews. During the centuries that followed the days of prophetic vision and teaching, and as the Jews became more and more subject to other people and burdened by taxation and cruel oppression, their expectation of a Messiah became increasingly one of a mighty conqueror who would redeem them from their oppression, would destroy their enemies and restore unto them their own independent kingdom and make them rule over their neighbours.

So thoroughly had this thought taken possession of the Jewish mind that our Lord found it all but impossible to impress upon even His own disciples the idea of a suffering Messiah and of a spiritual Kingdom as contrasted with a temporal one. He did not dare to instruct His disciples concerning His passion until late in His public ministry. It was necessary that He should first thoroughly convince them that He *was* the Messiah—the Anointed of God. This lesson was much easier for them to learn than was that concerning His suffering.

MEDITATION

"O Love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul on Thee;
I give Thee back the life I owe,
That in Thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.

O Cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from Thee;
I lay in dust life's glory dead,
And from the ground there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be."

The Cross is the emblem of our faith in a far more real sense than is the trident the emblem of Hinduism or the crescent of Mohammedanism. It is the centre and "source of power" of Christianity.

STUDY XVIII

His Death—(continued).

Still, the idea of the cross was fundamental to His teaching; and intimations of the cross early began to appear among His words. Even when He cleansed the Temple, at the beginning of His ministry, He said unto the Jews, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up" (John ii. 19). Later He said, "The days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then will they fast in that day" (Mark ii. 20). But it was during the last six months, before His passion, that the Lord definitely and systematically proclaimed to His own that He must suffer and die at the hands of His enemies. When He first received the confession, from His disciples, that He was "The Christ of God," He felt cheered and saw that the time had come to teach the further, and more difficult, lesson of His Passion. To Peter and the other disciples this teaching was not only strange, it was also repellent. Peter deplored such a thing as suffering or any other evidence, as he thought, of weakness on the part of his Lord; and he tried to dissuade Him from yielding to it (Matt. xvi. 13-23). But the Lord turned upon him with

severity, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art a stumbling block unto Me; for thou mindest not the things of God" (Luke ix. 18, 22; Mark viii. 31, 33). And it was at that time He revealed to His disciples that the same necessity which rested upon Him to suffer was also the duty of every one of His followers. "If any man would come after Me, let him take up his cross and follow Me" (Matt. xvi. 24).

It is hard for us to realize how difficult it was for the disciples, with all their Jewish pre-conceptions and Jewish hopes, to conceive of their Master, whom they devoutly believed to be their Messiah, as being able to perform His work through suffering. Though, for six months, He made constant reference to His death and continuously prepared them for His sufferings, they evidently did not take His words in their literal sense. They, probably, regarded His language, in this matter, as merely figurative, foretelling some temporary eclipse of His power which was to be followed later by His glorious assumption of authority. At any rate they were thoroughly stunned by His death, when it did come, and seemed hardly able to recover themselves, or to regain their faith upon His rising from the dead (Luke xxiv. 8, 11, 21). "But we hoped that it was He who should redeem Israel," were the despondent words of the two disciples to Him on their way to Emmaus.

MEDITATION

Why is the cross to Hindus, to-day, as to Jews and Greeks of old, an offence and a stumbling block? What connection is there between the cross which Jesus bore and that which each one of us must bear?

How great the blindness of Peter and all of us that we naturally prefer a conquering, to a suffering, Christ.

STUDY XIX

His Death—(continued).

Our Lord's teaching concerning His death was manifold.

(a) He knew that He was ordained to die, and that His death was prophesied of old. "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all the things that are written through the prophets shall be accomplished unto the Son of Man" (Luke xviii. 31).

This indeed is the burden of the Old Testament prophecy, "The Son of Man goeth, even as it is written of Him; but woe unto that man through whom the Son of Man is betrayed" (Matt. xxvi. 24). He knew that He could, if He wished, avoid death; but, "How then should the scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?" (Matt. xxvi. 54). The frequency of prophecy and the necessity of His death in the economy of salvation weighed upon Him daily and hourly.

(b) He therefore regarded His death as necessary in God's economy of grace to men. "Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory? These are My words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must needs be fulfilled" (Luke xxiv. 26, 44).

Wherein lay this necessity in His mind? It was certainly more than the idea that prophecy must be fulfilled. His death, doubtless, seemed to Him an essential part of the work which He had come to perform. He, unquestionably, felt that the cross was necessary for man's redemption. Listen to His pathetic prayer in Gethsemane,—“My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from Me; nevertheless not

as I will but as Thou wilt" (Matt. xxvi. 39). His human nature evidently shrank from the mighty surrender. And yet He felt impelled to take up the cross from a deep consciousness that in the cross alone could His redeeming work be fulfilled. Heaven's ordaining and human sin and need combined to create the necessity of the cross in His mind.

MEDITATION

Why should God suffer for man? Could He not find a painless way of Salvation?

The interrogation of the cross is a perennial one. Vicarious suffering is the law of love which is the law of life.

"Still Thy love, O Christ arisen,
Yearns to reach these souls in prison!
Through all depths of sin and loss
Drops the plummet of thy cross!
Never yet abyss was found
Deeper than that cross could sound."

STUDY XX

His Death—(continued).

And yet He knew and taught that His death was voluntary. He felt that the compulsion from within was greater than that from without. So far as He Himself was concerned, He knew that He had power to escape death. To militant Peter He turns and says, "Thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father, and He shall even now send Me more than twelve legions of angels" (Matt. xxvi. 53)? And every angel could rescue Him abundantly from the hands of His enemies and save Him from the cross. He knew that He

Himself possessed power enough to bring all His enemies' plans to nought. Hear Him again in those wonderfully revealing words,—“I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (John x. 17, 18). However much of a feeling He may have possessed that He was pre-destined to this suffering, and that He must fulfil the Old Testament type and prophecy, He nevertheless had the supreme consciousness that He gave Himself as a freewill offering unto the Lord and unto lost men.

This mystery of the self-dedication of Jesus and of His eternal dedication as of the Lamb to be slain (Rev. xiii. 8) is among the hidden things of God.

In the true and perfect spontaneity of Christ's sacrifice lay its highest spiritual power.

What was the significance and efficacy of Christ's death? He taught this through a number of expressive figures.

(i) He compared Himself, exalted upon the cross, to the brazen serpent, lifted up by Moses in the wilderness (John iii. 14-15). A look at the brazen serpent restored life unto the dying. A vision, by true faith, of the Christ crucified brought and brings, in some mystical way, life to perishing men. Our Lord, in the same connection, said unto His disciples,—“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto Myself.” But this He said, signifying by what manner of death He should die. No power in Heaven or on earth has stirred men and transformed them so marvellously as this vision of the suffering Saviour upon the Cross.

MEDITATION

How far has the vision of the cross transformed us ?

The voluntariness of Christ's death was its efficacy. He is able to save to the uttermost because He gave Himself a freewill offering unto death. It is only the freewill offering of your life which will tell.

Study XXI

His Death—(continued).

(ii) The figure of the Paschal Lamb (Matt. xxvi. 19, 26 ; Mark xiv. 16, 22 ; Luke xxii. 15). The feast of the Passover was perhaps the most precious and significant to the Jews ; and it was in connection with this feast that Jesus established the Eucharist. As they were all gathered around the Paschal table, the broken body of the Lamb lay there before them, which led Him to speak of His broken body to be offered for our race. The blood of the Passover Lamb, sprinkled upon the doorposts of the houses of Israel, saved them from death. He also is "The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," and through His blood are men everywhere saved. He knew that in Himself the myriad lambs that had been slain by Israel found their anti-type and fulfilment. And the vicariousness of His death was thus signified by all Jewish sacrifices.

(iii) He became a Ransom.

"The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. xx. 28). A more correct translation may be—"A ransom *instead of* many." This may have reference to the Old Testament conception expressed in Exodus xxi. 30.

Thus in some way He is said to have purchased the redemption of man. We must not interpret this as a commercial transaction. All that we can say is that our Lord conceived of His death as in some way offered in behalf of, instead of, and for the rescue of, men. We are not told from whom or how this ransom was made. Nor do we need to inquire.

It is enough to know that through this word 'ransom' the Lord Jesus revealed to us the connection between His death and our eternal life.

(iv) He was the Good Shepherd dying for His Sheep.

"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd layeth down His life for the sheep" (John x. 11, 15).

He died that He might deliver His sheep from their enemy. In vss. 15-18 we see that Jesus was anticipating death, and that that death was to be vicariously offered for His people.

MEDITATION

Note the infinite preciousness of our redemption. Vicariousness is the golden cord which runs from Genesis to Revelation. It also not only binds heaven and earth; it is the language of love in all human relationships.

Study XXII.

His Death—(continued).

(v) He compares His death to the dying wheat, through whose death a rich harvest is obtained. "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit" (John xii. 24).

In these words of our Lord we see the fructifying power of His death in the lives of others. Without dying He would be "alone"—would abide in sad isolation, void of influence and without results in life. His death alone could produce the harvest of blessing to others.

He also applies this truth to all men and more especially to His followers. It is of general application. "He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal" (vs. 25).

(vi) His blood was the "Covenant Blood."—It was the blood of the new Covenant. "This is My blood of the Covenant which is poured out for many" (Mark xiv. 24; also Luke xxii. 20). The use of the blood in the Old Testament was that of making and sealing covenants (see Exodus xxiv. 8; Zechariah ix. 11). And in every case it was the blood of death—the blood of animals slain vicariously for sinful men.

Therefore we have here represented by our Lord His own death suffered in order to fulfil God's covenant of grace and of life with man.

(vii) It was the blood of the Covenant for the remission of sins. This is the result of the shedding of His blood (Matt. xxvi. 28). "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." Christ's power to forgive sins (so often mentioned) was conferred upon Him in virtue of His death.

Thus the cross which, to the world, became the emblem of Christ's death—and the worst form of death was that by crucifixion (Phil. ii. 8),—became the emblem of all power and the source of all glory among Christians (Gal. vi. 14).

MEDITATION

How far are you "alone" in your life? Do you seek more the fellowship that comes through the cross of suffering? Have you entered into a "Covenant of Blood" with Christ?

"In the Cross of Christ I glory
Towering o'er the wrecks of time.
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime."

STUDY XXIII

His Death—(concluded).

Through the death of Christ Christians find spiritual nourishment. This is a significant mark of our Lord's teaching concerning His Supper (John vi. 49-51). A feast upon Christ's broken body and shed blood. In John vi. 53-55, we find that in partaking of Christ there is not only nourishment but life eternal. "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed."

Our Lord, in an important sense, finished His work through His death. "It is finished" was one of the significant words on the cross. He not only was then able to look back upon the completion of His humiliation and suffering; He also knew that the agonies of the cross represented the achievement of the great work of salvation for our human race.

MEDITATION

How far is the Lord's Supper to you a memorial, and how far a feast of refreshing?

In what sense did the Lord say that His work was finished on the Cross?

Christ is the only food that satisfies. The soul finds in Him alone its fulness unto eternal life. "Eternal Life" is John's expression for the everlasting fulness and richness which abides for every believer in Jesus.

STUDY XXIV

His Future Life and Work

Our Lord never looked upon His death as the end and the completion of His work. He always looked beyond to still greater effort and larger achievements in behalf of man.

(a) His Resurrection. He generally connected the announcement of His death with that of His resurrection (Mark viii. 31; ix. 31; x. 34; John ii. 19). "After three days He shall rise again," was the oft-repeated refrain to His narration of His sufferings. Death could not hold Him. He found His great victory in the hour of His supposed defeat. Death, the great enemy, became to Him, as it has become to all His followers, a subject power and an angel which leads unto life.

He appeared unto His disciples, perhaps, every one of the seven Sundays, between His resurrection and Pentecost (John xx. 16, 17, 19; Luke xxiv. 15; Mark xvi. 9; Matt. xxviii. 18, etc.). It was, probably, because of the persistence of His post-resurrection appearances on Sundays, that this day was called by the early Christians "The Lord's Day."

He was very particular in impressing upon His disciples the reality of His resurrection; and He upbraided them for not at once believing in it. "Reach hither thy finger and see My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and put it into My side; and be not faithless

but believing" were His tender words of reproof to Thomas (John xx. 26-29).

By His gentle words, mingled with encouragement and reproof, to mourning Martha, He proclaimed Himself as the resurrection and the life. "He that believeth on Me, though he die yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die" (John xi. 25-26). This is not the only occasion upon which He taught concerning His own resurrection. He said that all who believed in Him should rise again unto eternal life. "Because I live ye shall live also" (John xiv. 19).

For forty days, after His resurrection, He appeared unto His disciples with the chief purpose of confirming their faith in Himself; and then He passed away and ascended unto the Father (Acts i. 6-11).

MEDITATION

Why did our Lord appear only to the disciples after His resurrection? Do you now, as did the Apostle Paul, know the power of His resurrection as an experience of your life?

Christ's resurrection is the battle ground of Christianity. For it is the test of the Supernatural character of our faith and God's witness to all that Jesus wrought.

STUDY XXV

His Future Life and Work—(continued).

(b) INTERCESSION

Even while Jesus was here upon earth He prayed much for His own. The most sublime and touching of all His recorded prayers is that intercession with the Father for His disciples in the Upper Room on the night of His betrayal (John xvii).

And on that same night He endeavours to assure the disciples that His intercession will not cease with His departure from earth. "I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send Him unto you" (John xvi. 7).

He urges them to be instant in prayer after His departure; to pray also "in His name," promising to do what they ask. And "whatsoever ye shall ask in My name that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John xiv. 13).

And again He tells them that if anything is asked of the Father in His name, it will be granted to them. And so He urges them to persevere in prayer with hope; because He himself will be with the Father, supplicating Him in their behalf (John xv. 7-24).

He thus shows unto them that His deep interest in them during the past will not abate, but will be continued in their behalf throughout the future. And He makes known unto them the precious fact that His intercession above will specially result in the sending of the Holy Spirit to "stand by their side," to help and to cheer them (John xiv. 16-18). "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter (Advocate) that He may be with you for ever."

MEDITATION

Have you learned from Him (in John xvii) the lesson of intercessory prayer?

Christ as Holy Spirit within the Saints inditing their requests, and Christ on the throne presenting these same requests to the Father—this is the mystery of our faith and the supreme help and comfort of the Christian.

STUDY XXVI

His Future Life and Work—(continued).

(c) HIS SECOND COMING

There is no teaching, in the Old Testament or in other writings of the Jews, of a two-fold coming of the Messiah. They thought that He was to come once only, and was to perfect His work once for all.

It is therefore a striking fact that Jesus repeatedly and emphatically taught His disciples that His death would not permanently sever Him from them; but that He would come again to them in order to inaugurate the final consummation of His Kingdom.

According to the teaching of the Synoptics Jesus definitely announced to His disciples that He would again, personally, return to the world clothed with majesty and power and invested with all divine authority (Matt. xxv. 31). Note, in reading this passage, the impressiveness of the scene described. We are told that He will come to judge all men.

The time of the second coming of our Lord is known, He says, to no one. Hence the greatest vigilance is urged by our Lord upon His disciples. "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching" (Luke xii. 35-40). Constant preparation to meet the coming Lord and to enter in with Him into His glory is also emphasized by Him through the parable of the Ten Virgins (Matt. xxv. 1-11).

Note also the suddenness of His coming. "As it came to pass in the days of Noah, even so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man" (Luke xvii. 26-30, 34).

MEDITATION

Why should the Lord return to this world? It is vain to speculate about the time of His coming; but safe always to be ready for His appearing; and wise to be eagerly looking with faith and hope for that coming glory.

STUDY XXVII

His Future Life and Work—(continued).**HIS SECOND COMING—(continued).**

From some passages it seems as if His second coming was a thing to be expected by the Apostles in their own day. "Verily, I say unto you, there are some here of them that stand by who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Kingdom of God come with power" (Mark ix. 1; see also Matt. xvi. 27-28).

It is possible, or even probable, that Jesus' description of His coming judgment upon Jerusalem, forty years later, and His description of His final coming and judgment, were not clearly distinguished at first in the Apostolic mind (see Matt. xxiv. 15). The destruction of Jerusalem was doubtless regarded, as it really was, a "Coming of the Lord." But it is different from His final appearance upon the "Great Day of the Lord." This final coming of the Christ will be at the end and upon the consummation of this dispensation.

The nature of His coming is indicated. The description given in Matt. xxv. 31 (Mark xiv. 62) is doubtless figurative; but it reveals regal and divine glory. He who first came in poverty and was cradled in a manger will then come with divine authority and supreme power and enthroned upon the clouds. He will come with heavenly majesty.

The *Object* of His coming doubtless was, in the first place, to introduce His own disciples to eternal bliss. Thus He will come as our glorified Saviour. "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again and will receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also" (John xiv. 2-3). He will also come, as we have seen, as the supreme Judge to give unto every one the reward due to his past life and conduct whether it be good or evil. When that day of judgment closes, the destiny of every member of our race will be, for ever, sealed (Matt. xxv. 46).

MEDITATION

How would you compare, or contrast, the first and the second coming of Jesus? What blessings will He bring at His Coming?

The supreme significance of His coming is that He comes to test and reward His own. Then will the patience of the saints be rewarded, and the smile of eternity will lighten their countenance.

STUDY XXVIII

His Future Life and Work—(continued).

HIS SECOND COMING IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

In the Gospel of John the Second Coming of our Lord is presented in a different light. It is more a spiritual return into the heart of His disciples, for comfort, strength and inspiration. He teaches here that though He is to die, and thus is to be taken away from them, He will nevertheless again return unto them. His return unto the Father will turn out to be for their ultimate good.

His return will be pre-eminently in the person of the Holy Spirit. "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may be with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth" (John xiv. 16). And yet in the same breath He says,— "I will not leave you desolate, I come unto you" (John xiv. 18-28). This coming of our Lord was pre-eminently realized on the day of Pentecost. It was then, in the person of the Spirit, that He came with manifest power into the world that He might vivify and abide in His body, the Church (John xvi. 16-22).

And it is in harmony with this spiritual conception of our Lord's return and of His abiding presence in His Church that we read His promises of His presence with the disciples, in the Synoptics. "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii. 20). And "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 20). In this important sense He verily returned in His Holy Spirit upon that day of Pentecostal blessing, and has been abiding in the Church ever since.

MEDITATION

How do the pictures of His Coming differ in the Synoptics and in John? Has the assurance of His coming, according to John, been fulfilled in your experience?

Christ has gone to come again, and yet He is here. He who said—"I will come again" said also "Lo, I am with you alway." The present Christ and the coming Christ—another paradox!

CHAPTER II

CHRIST'S TEACHING ABOUT THE FATHER

STUDY I

A Contrast

We have seen that Jesus came to reveal the Father. We have also recognized the fact that the Fatherhood of God was somewhat revealed in the Old Testament. Therefore, Jesus did not present, for the first time, the doctrine of God's Fatherhood. Nevertheless, He brought the doctrine into such prominence and gave it such unique emphasis as had never been given it before, or has ever since been revealed by any Faith. In the ancestral religion of India God has never been known, certainly has never been fully recognized, as the Heavenly Father. The expression, "Heavenly Father," is indeed known in Hindu literature; but in Hindu thought it has found little place. In the old Greek and Roman Pantheon supremacy was given to Zeus and Jupiter, but fatherhood hardly ever. Even in the Jewish faith God's Fatherhood was obscured by the white light of His divine justice and holiness. So that God was the dread King and the Presence upon which no one could look and live.

But Jesus made the Fatherhood of God the supreme feature and centre of His revelation; and in the Fatherhood is included the Motherhood of God which is so dear to the oriental mind.

To the Jews God was the transcendent One who dealt with His people through a host of angels of many grades and degrees. Christ brought the Heavenly Father close to the heart and life of every man.

Of all the religious teachers of the world He alone enabled His disciples to lift up their eyes heavenward and say, in all confidence, love and sincerity,—“Our Father who art in Heaven.” A more precious thought and a more glorious revelation than this was never brought to our race. The Lord’s Prayer is the prayer of the ages and the true key-note to the human heart and its need, simply because it breathes the filial spirit of man and is grounded upon God’s universal parenthood. This is the distinctive teaching and the supreme revelation of Jesus.

Consider its prevalence in the Gospels. While in the Old Testament God’s Fatherhood is rarely mentioned, in the Gospel of Matthew alone He is referred to by Christ as “Father,” “The Father,” “My Father” and “Your Father” more than forty times. And in the Gospel of St. John the expression, “The Father,” is found more than sixty times.

Thus Christ softened the severity of the Old Testament picture of the divine character, where a vision of God meant death, and converted it into a rapt vision of life and joy to all men.

Our Lord Himself was deeply conscious that God was His Father. The frequent words, “My Father” and “Father,” represent this consciousness of our Lord which became to Him the assured foundation for calling Him “Your Father.”

And thus, from the Old Testament emphasis upon God’s regnant justice and holiness, Jesus carries our thought to love as the supreme test of Heaven—a holy and just love, it is true; nevertheless a love that is enthroned in the divine character and which suffuses all else; for He taught that God is love.

MEDITATION

*Wherein does God as Father differ from God as King?
Which is your chosen way of looking at God?*

*Love is the essence and Fatherhood the expression of
our religion. This revelation of Jesus is gripping the
world increasingly and is bringing unspeakable blessings to
our race.*

STUDY II

What Does this Fatherhood Mean?

Let us study a few of the corollaries of this teaching of the Fatherhood of God.

1. He taught that God is ever ready and anxious to provide all our temporal wants. "Be not anxious for your life what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body what ye shall put on. Behold the birds of the heaven. your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they? Your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things (Matt. vi. 25-32). He who careth for the sparrows numbers the very hairs of your head; for is He not your Father (Matt. x. 29-31)? He who provides for the grass, the flowers and the sparrows, certainly cannot forget or cease to provide for His own children. Anxiety is rank unbelief, when such a Father provides for all our temporal wants. The all-searching Eyes are the loving eyes of our Father.

2. Our Heavenly Father cannot fail to answer the true prayers of His children. How frequently our Lord emphasizes this thought. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. . . . If ye then, being evil, know

how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in Heaven give good things to them that ask Him" (Matt. vii. 7-11)? Can we, fathers, hesitate to give the best and most needful things to our crying children? Never, if they are in our possession to give. Here is a Father who owns and can bestow all blessings; and who is, moreover, infinitely more willing to give unto us His best gifts than we are to give our small best unto our own children. Therefore ask with confidence, seek with diligence, knock with perseverance, and be assured that your Heavenly Father is infinitely able and supremely anxious to give all those spiritual blessings that you need and are prepared to receive. What ground for faith here!

MEDITATION

Does your belief in the Fatherhood of God scatter your anxieties? Does your sense of sonship bring assurance and confidence in your prayers?

The love of the Father is enforced by His omnipotence and omniscience. He can give all that His fatherly love prompts.

STUDY III

Characteristics of Fatherhood—(continued).

3. He is ready to give Himself, in His Spirit, to all who seek. This is His supreme gift. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him"? (Luke xi. 13). What greater assurance can man ask for the bestowal of God's own life and divine nature upon those who seek the same in the earnest sincerity of prayer!

4. God is yearning and seeking to save man from sin. How could His Fatherly heart look upon our race lying in the depths of sin without hastening to our rescue? Wonderful is this vision of the seeking Father given to us in those three parables of the lost! (Luke xv). This threefold picture of God, seeking to save men, is perhaps the brightest of all gems in God's Word.

The question has been raised, and is much discussed, whether God is the Father of *all* men. The parable of the Prodigal Son is our Lord's reply to this enquiry. The Prodigal in rags, perishing with hunger, and feeding the swine, was still the child of the Heavenly Father; and this loving Father again received His prodigal child, and rejoiced with exceeding joy in his return.

And yet our Lord taught that a man may sell his divine birthright and so prostitute all his powers as to become a veritable child of the devil. He turned upon His Jewish enemies and said, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do" (John viii. 44). On another occasion He said, "Love your enemies and do them good and lend, never despairing; and your reward shall be great and ye shall be sons of the Most High" (Luke vi. 35). As if He said, "So long as you hate and persecute, you are the sons of the devil; but when you become loving and forgiving, then do ye become the sons of God." Man is indeed a child, but a lost child, of the Father. He may have so lost the Heavenly lineaments as to resemble a brute; and yet in his lowest depths of sin there are left some vestiges of Heaven. He may, as the Prodigal, "come to himself," arise

and go to the Father. It is this thought of man's Heavenly lineage that gives to God peculiar zest in his work of salvation and brings joy "in the presence of the angels of God" upon man's repentance.

MEDITATION

Does your vision of God's Fatherhood stir you to become a more worthy son? Will you try to find the lineaments of the Father in all men?

Our Father giveth without stint or limit to His children. The meanest beggar and most abject sinner are His children! and yet how they have sold their birthright!

STUDY IV

Fatherhood in John's Gospel

In John's Gospel we have the striking addition that Jesus, by His own life and character, revealed the Father. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," are His chiding words to Philip (John xiv. 9-10). Here we see the impatience of the Lord as, at the close of His ministry, one of His own asks for the revelation of the Father. "Have I not, Philip, been revealing to you daily, for more than three years by My life and character the Father whom thou seekest? My every act and word and disposition has been with a view to manifest unto you the very heart and thought of the Father. It is only as you pattern after Me that you may become sons of the Father." Thus only "Ye may be sons of your Father who is in Heaven" (Matt. v. 45).

Dwell upon this wonderful thought that in the person of our incarnate, crucified and risen Lord we have a constant and perfect vision of the infinite and eternal Father above.

Remember also that in this doctrine of the universal Fatherhood of God we daily learn the sublime lesson of the Brotherhood of Man. One Father, one family, one human brotherhood, cemented by the blood of our Elder Brother.

MEDITATION

How shall we better know the Father in the Son?

Jesus is the only way to the Father. John saw deeper than Philip. His eagle eyes saw the Father reflected in every word, act and thought of the Christ.

CHAPTER III

JESUS' TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT

STUDY I

The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

We read about the work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament. From the first chapter of Genesis where we read (vs. 2), "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters," unto the last page of the Old Testament Scriptures, the divine Spirit breathed into and upon the hearts of men. But His work, in the Old Dispensation, was vague and general rather than definite and personal, save in the case of a few prophets and holy men.

But in the teaching of Jesus, the Spirit is presented as an intimate Person and as an indispensable Power in the life of every child of God. The fourth Gospel gives more prominence to Christ's doctrine of the Holy Spirit than do the Synoptics, and is therefore sometimes called "The Gospel of the Spirit." There

are, however, frequent references, in all the Gospels, to the Third Person in the Trinity.

In ancient prophecy (Joel ii. 28, etc.) He was promised as the characteristic Agent of the New Dispensation,—“I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit.” These words were literally fulfilled upon the birthday of the Christian church—the day of Pentecost.

MEDITATION

Has He who was prophesied in the Old, and sent at the beginning of the New, Dispensation become a power in your life? Which is yours, the legalism of the Old, or the life of the New?

The exception in the Old Testament has become the normal life of the New—the life of the Spirit. He who was an occasional Visitor in Israel resides permanently in His Church as its animating Power!

STUDY II

The Personality of the Holy Spirit

1. Our Lord presented the Holy Spirit as a Person, possessed of all the characteristics of a living, separate Personality (see Luke xii. 12). “For the Holy Spirit shall teach you in the very hour what ye ought to say.”

For the fullest revelation of His personal qualities, we must study the great discourse of our Lord at the close of His ministry in the Upper Room (John xiv-xvi).

His personal characteristics are revealed by the names which are given to Him by our Lord. He is the “Holy Spirit”—the Spirit who makes men holy. He is the

"Spirit of truth"—the repository of saving truth; He reveals it and convinces men concerning it. He is "The Paraclete"—the Advocate and Comforter, "Who is called to stand by" and defend and cheer His disciple.

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is presented by our Lord as the most heinous and terrible of sins, and at the same time it emphasizes the Spirit's personality (Matt. xii. 28-31).

In like manner the use of His name by our Lord in the baptismal form is an equally emphatic testimony to His personality.

MEDITATION

Do you in your prayers conceive of the Spirit as a Person or as an influence? What personal work has He wrought in you?

The "communion of the Spirit" is possible to one only when He regards the Spirit as a Person who can be grieved and can be obeyed and encouraged.

STUDY III

The Holy Spirit in the Life of our Lord

Consider the prominence of the Holy Spirit in the life of our Lord Himself.

He was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Luke i. 35).

At His baptism the Spirit descended, in the form of a dove, upon Him (Matt. iii. 16).

He drove Him into the wilderness for the great struggle with, and mighty triumph over, the tempter (Mark i. 12; Matt. iv. 1). Jesus must have told His disciples concerning this experience. In His divine intimacy with them, He revealed unto them many of the mysteries of His life.

It is interesting to note that Luke says more about the Holy Spirit than do Matthew and Mark. Was it not because he was the intimate companion and helper of the Apostle Paul, whose life and service were so markedly directed by the Spirit?

From the wilderness He passed into Galilee in the strength of the Spirit (Luke iv. 14).

The Spirit was the source of His power in service. He cast out demons by the Spirit of God (Matt. xii. 28). He was anointed by the Spirit and sent forth to preach the Gospel and to bring the blessing of spiritual liberty to men (Luke iv. 18).

It was in the same Spirit that He found His joy and rejoicing (Luke x. 21).

His every act was inspired by the divine Spirit. No one ever lived who was so constantly and completely under the sway of the Spirit of God.

The Lord emphasized the need and the blessedness of the Spirit in the life of the disciples. He glorified the Spirit as the Spirit ever glorified Him.

"It is good for you that I go unto the Father; for if I go not the Paraclete will not come." "His Spiritual presence will be far better for you than any physical presence." This was the substance of our Lord's consoling words to His own on that memorable night (John xiv. 18; xvi. 7).

MEDITATION

Is not the complete dependence of Christ upon the Spirit the great lesson of power for the Christian life?

The beautiful intimacy between the Lord and the Spirit is worthy of note and of imitation. If He was led in all things by the Spirit, how much more should we be?

STUDY IV

The Work of the Spirit

Our Lord speaks in detail of the work which the Spirit renders to the disciples and others.

(a) He will convict and convert souls, bringing them into the full blessing of Christian life and discipleship. The New Birth is nought else but the entrance of the new life of the Spirit, who quickens the dead soul. "Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. . . . That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit" (John iii. 5-6).

He will also convince and convict of sin, of righteousness and of judgment to come (John xvi. 8-11). The dreadful hideousness of sin He will reveal, and will bring to the soul true hatred and abhorrence of all sin.

(b) He will continue Christ's work by bringing the blessings of His salvation into the soul itself. He will make vital to the disciple every loving effort which Jesus put forth in his behalf. "He shall take of mine and shall declare it unto you" (John xvi. 14).

(c) "He shall teach you all things" (John xiv. 26). The wonderful truths of Christianity and the manifold experiences of life will be transfigured and made radiant unto the Christian through His illuminating power.

(d) "He shall bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you" (xiv. 26). The Spirit is Christ's Remembrancer. He has the power to quicken the disciple's memory and to restore unto the soul a glowing picture of what Christ wrought for us, of blessed experiences with Him, and of former joys in Him.

(e) "He shall guide you into all the truth" (xvi. 13). Into rich pastures and by silent waters of saving truth will He guide the soul and will satisfy His own by ever new visions of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. For is He not the "Spirit of Truth"?

MEDITATION

"Our blest Redeemer, ere He breathed

His tender last farewell,

A Guide, a Comforter bequeathed

With us to dwell.

And His that gentle voice we hear,

Soft as the breath of even,

That checks each thought, that calms each fear,

And speaks of heaven.

And every virtue we possess,

And every victory won,

And every thought of holiness,

Are His alone."

STUDY V

The Work of the Spirit—(continued).

(f) "He shall declare unto you the things that are to come" (xvi. 13). He will give unto the disciple new visions of the Joys of Heaven—the things which Christ has gone before to prepare for those who love Him. The blessed hopes and the glorious visions of the great hereafter must become real to us through Him. He alone can illumine the future; and this is one of the blessings for the bestowal of which He has come into our hearts.

(g) "He shall glorify Me" (xvi. 14). This is the pre-eminent function of the Holy Spirit, to exalt and to glorify our blessed Lord in the heart and life of

every Christian and in the esteem of the world. As it was the business of Christ to glorify the Father, so is it the business of the Spirit to glorify the Christ; and so also is it the duty of the disciple to glorify the Spirit.

(h) "He shall bear witness of Me" (xv. 26). Christ bore witness of the Father and revealed the Father by His life; so does the Spirit of God daily bear witness to our Lord in our hearts and become unto us the abiding witness of the Christ within. This witness will He render not only by whispering His testimony into the hearts of saints, but also by becoming in the life of every true Christian a power to bear witness for the Lord. "But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be My witnesses, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts i. 8). This power to give testimony is Spirit-fed. Every genuine word of witness that we bear for Christ is given unto us by the Spirit of God.

MEDITATION

What "things that are to come" has the Spirit revealed to us? How much do we witness for Christ through the Spirit's prompting?

Remember that almost every spiritual blessing which the Spirit is to bring to the world must come through the channel of the people of God. How great our responsibility!

STUDY VI

The Work of the Spirit—(concluded).

(i) "And He shall give you another Comforter, that He may be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth" (John xiv. 16; see also Luke xii. 11-12).

The Greek word "Paraclete" is here translated "Comforter". In 1 John ii. 1 it is rendered "Advocate". It literally means "He who is called to be at one's side". And this is precisely what God's Spirit is, and must increasingly be, to every disciple. Christ has sent Him that He may be ever at the Christian's side to plead his cause, to give him wisdom, to dumb-found his enemies and thus to bring comfort, strength and cheer to him in all his difficulties and discouragements.

. In an important sense the Holy Spirit came not in power until Christ was glorified—crucified (John vii. 39).

. The disciples were ordered to wait at Jerusalem until He descended upon them. "Tarry ye in the city until ye be clothed with power from on high" (Luke xxiv. 49).

Jesus also taught that the Spirit would spring and flow up in rich life in the heart of every believer. "The water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life" (John iv. 14). The life-renewing power of the Spirit within was frequently emphasized by our Lord.

Yea more, and higher than this, was that power of the Holy Spirit which He said would pass out of every believer's heart and life in fertilizing, cleansing and thirst-quenching potency into the lives of others. "From within Him shall flow rivers of living water" (John vii. 38-39).

Jesus, moreover, taught that the Father is ever anxious to impart unto His own this, highest, of all His gifts:—"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him" (Luke xi. 13). How *much* more!

MEDITATION

Have you realized the two great blessings of the Spirit,—“A well springing up into everlasting life” and “out of Him shall flow rivers”—the abounding life and the overflowing life?

Note the inexpressible eagerness of the Father to give Himself to us?

CHAPTER IV

JESUS' TEACHING ABOUT THE KINGDOM
OF GOD

STUDY I

The Name of the Kingdom

In an important sense, the burden and the substance of the teaching of our Lord was the Kingdom of God. He began His ministry by proclaiming that the Kingdom of God is at hand. One of the last words, which He uttered before His crucifixion, was “My Kingdom is not of this world.” Just before His ascension He appeared to His disciples “Speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God” (Acts i. 3). To Him this Kingdom was a matter of supreme importance. It permeated all His thoughts. It was the substance of His message to man. Its realization in the world was the passion of His soul.

It was the message of His forerunner, John. “Repent,” said he, “for the Kingdom of God is at hand.” John saw and proclaimed the advent of the Kingdom.

Our Lord began where John did by proclaiming the coming of this Kingdom (Mark i. 15). And

from this starting point He gradually advanced to a full exposition of the Kingdom. While Jesus only speaks twice of the "Church", which later largely absorbed the idea of the Kingdom, He always proclaimed and elaborated the idea of the Kingdom of God.

In the Gospel of Matthew, this expression "Kingdom of God" is substituted by the term "Kingdom of Heaven", which is peculiar to that Gospel. By comparing parallel passages in the Synoptics we see that the two expressions are used synonymously—"The Kingdom of Heaven" emphasizing its heavenly origin, while the "Kingdom of God" exalts prominently its Founder.

God is the great head of this Kingdom. Christ taught us to say and pray, "Thy Kingdom come." In harmony with this, Jesus, as the Messiah, may be called the divine Viceroy, or the Prime Minister, or Executive, who came to render effective this Kingdom in the world. Jesus, however, sometimes spoke of the Kingdom as His own. "The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His Kingdom all things that cause stumbling" (Matt. xiii. 41). And at the time of His trial He said "My Kingdom is not of this world." And truly He is the King of His people to-day, holding above them His banner of love and leading them on to victory.

MEDITATION

The two emphases of our Lord's revelation are the Fatherhood and the Kingdom of God—the former accentuates love and the latter righteousness as the twin pillars of Christianity.

STUDY II

The Characteristics of the Kingdom

The Sermon on the Mount may be called the great Proclamation, or the Charter of this Kingdom of God. In it are gathered the important teaching and fullest statement of the principles of the Kingdom. We learn that this is:—

1. A Spiritual Kingdom. It is presented in striking contrast with the old Jewish conception of a world-kingdom with all the display of physical force and the exercise of worldly authority. Jesus taught that His Kingdom “cometh not with observation;” it is rather “within” you (Luke xvii. 20-21). In other words it is a Kingdom of the heart and not of the outward life; it is based on spiritual principles and appeals to spiritual motive.

The Beatitudes form the preamble of this Charter, and all these reveal spiritual conditions only and therefore emphasize the spiritual nature of the Kingdom (Matt. v. 3-11). Blessed are the poor in spirit, they who mourn, the meek, the merciful, they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, the pure in heart, the peace-makers, and the patient under persecution. This is the scheme of blessedness which awaits the members of this Kingdom.

We need to emphasize the fact that every beatitude here proclaimed expresses quality of spirit and not of outward possession. It is not wealth or culture or social status, but qualities of the heart and graces of the spirit which are here recognized as traits and characteristics of God's Kingdom. Nothing is more fundamentally important than this,

namely, that attitude of mind and possession of soul are the only stamp of this Kingdom. Humility, sensitiveness to sin, meekness of heart, a passion after righteousness, a love of the lowest, purity of soul, a yearning to reconcile men to each other, a firm endurance in behalf of one's highest convictions—these constitute the guarantee of that blessedness which belongs only to the Kingdom of God. This Kingdom ignores all else save character, or soul endowment.

All Christ's teaching was addressed to the individual heart and had reference to thought and motive only. The lustful look, the breath of hate, the pride of heart—these constituted to Him the essence of sin which brought death in their trail. And likeness to God consisted in humbleness of heart and in general impulses towards all men—even our enemies (Matt. v.) And for these graces God looks into the soul of every man.

MEDITATION

In religion all forms of ritual have no value, save as they lead to spiritual thought and life.

Nothing in faith has permanent value which comes not from the heart to adorn the spirit of man.

STUDY III

A Present and a Future Kingdom

2. This Kingdom is, at the same time, a present and a future Kingdom. Time and again our Lord taught that the Kingdom of God had already come. "If I by the finger of God cast out demons, then is the Kingdom of God come upon you" (Luke xi. 20; see also xvii. 20-21). This was true. In the coming of Christ "the Kingdom of God was at hand." He was

the embodiment of its Spirit. He had come to usher in a new Kingdom and to declare, as never before, its principles, and to call men to a possession of its life and blessing. He came into the world to live its life and to impart unto men its inspiration. Into a thousand lives He introduced its leavening influences. He came too as King, and He proclaimed His authority, demanded from all loyalty, and called men everywhere to membership in its suffering, and to participation in its victory and glory.

Thus His Kingdom comes into the hearts of His own as a present and an abiding power to rule both their lives and the lives of numberless others through them.

And yet He spoke of it as a future Kingdom. In the prayer which He taught His disciples to pray He gave prominence to the petition, "Thy Kingdom Come" (Matt. vii. 21-23; viii. 11). He thus showed that, in an important sense, the Kingdom was a future expectation. And, certainly, its glory and perfection are to be realized in the future. Such a Kingdom as His is one that will require time to grow to its deepest spiritual power and to its highest glory. The Lord Himself beautifully expressed, through parables, His idea of the development of this Kingdom. Its early insignificance is compared to the small mustard seed (Matt. xiii. 31). Twelve unknown disciples were all that distinctly represented the power of His Kingdom among men in those first days. But that small seed had within itself the potency of life and grew into a tree whose shade and fruit have blessed millions. Moreover, He beautifully describes the gradualness of this growth by the analogy of Spring (Mark iv. 26-29). "The earth beareth fruit of herself; first the blade and then the ear, then

the full grain in the ear." Truly this Kingdom cometh not with observation; without noise or ostentation its life spreads, and its living organism expands.

The Kingdom is now present in all its potentiality in the hearts of the sons of men; under the nourishing influence of the Holy Spirit its life will expand and its graces shine increasingly unto the full light of the perfect day of God hereafter.

MEDITATION

Distrust every practice of religion which does not end in the beatitudes.

This Kingdom must grow and become universal because its King is the Almighty and Eternal One.

STUDY IV

A Universal Kingdom

3. Moreover, this is a universal Kingdom.

It cannot be limited within the bounds of any race or people. It is a Kingdom of world-wide destiny. We could not expect it to be otherwise, in view of its Spirit and of the character of its Leader. Traits of character and graces of the Spirit have no geographical bounds.

It is true that our Lord began His work among the Jews, and the horizon of His labours had a narrow, national character. As He listened to the prayer of the Canaanitish woman, He answered and said, "I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. xv. 21-24). From these and such words one might think that He was but a narrow-minded Jew, with sympathies that were very limited. And as He sent forth His disciples, He charged them, saying, "Go not into any way of the Gentiles, and

enter not into any city of the Samaritans; but go rather to the lost sheep of the House of Israel" (Matt. x. 5-6). These words also might, in themselves, indicate a worthy, but a very narrow, ambition.

Yet this peculiarity is easily explained by the knowledge that it was His purpose to work *intensively* rather than *extensively*. That is, He aimed to sow in the minds of a few of His intimates the seed of His Kingdom and to nourish it there into life and power, so that they would go forth as His messengers to carry to all nations the truth of His Kingdom, as indeed they subsequently did. Limited as He was by His Jewish environment, He found that He could establish thus His Kingdom upon earth more rapidly than by the other method of immediate personal appeal to the Gentiles.

MEDITATION

Note the contrast between Christianity, on the one hand, and Hinduism on the other—the former an outgoing, triumphant faith, which aims to bring all men into the Kingdom of Christ—the other a decadent faith, because satisfied to be a religion of one people only. It has no door of entrance for any others.

STUDY V

A Universal Kingdom—(continued).

He sent forth His apostles to many peoples; but He himself left not the confines of that "least of all lands," Palestine, and devoted Himself, all but exclusively, to His own, narrow-minded, Jewish people that He might thereby so concentrate His energies and so centralize His power that it might go forth with irresistible potency unto the ends of the earth.

And yet He did not neglect the Gentiles, entirely (Matt. viii. 5-12). The Roman centurion not only found a deep place in His sympathy, but, by his simple faith, elicited His highest admiration. In like manner He did not neglect the opportunity of bringing His love and His message of life to those whom the Jews hated and despised above all others—the Samaritans (John iv. 39-42). And was it not to the Samaritan woman that we first read of His proclaiming directly and openly His own Messiahship? And upon the Syro-Phoenician woman He bestowed the blessings she sought.

In the fourth Gospel the universality of His Kingdom is consistently maintained. See His wonderful intercessory prayer (ch. xvii). While intensely concerned for His own, He said, “Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on Me through their word, that they may all be one” (vs. 20).

MEDITATION

Think of the Man with a Jewish environment but with a world-wide horizon; confined to petty Palestine, but breathing His blessing upon all lands; born, reared and crucified in Israel, and yet the seed of His life and death producing a world-wide harvest of salvation!

STUDY VI

A Universal Kingdom—(continued).

In this connection two facts stand forth conspicuously in His teaching.

(1) The truths and the blessings of His Kingdom have not a national, but a universal, extension and application. The Kingdom which He established was, and is, a world-wide Kingdom. “The field is the

world," was His declaration to His disciples (Matt. xiii. 37-38). "This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations" (Matt. xxiv. 14). And so, in His last Commission, He sent forth His disciples and gave them the ringing command,—“Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations” (Matt. xxviii. 19-20). And listen to His significant words of appreciation of the loving act of Mary in anointing His body, “Verily I say unto you, wheresoever the Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her” (Mark xiv. 9).

All these passages bear clear testimony to His purpose to limit His Kingdom only by the bounds of human life and human need.

It is the universality of Christianity which most clearly and powerfully proclaims among men its divine origin and character to our race.

(2) Moreover, our Lord taught, by two beautiful parables, the wonderful, expansive power of the Kingdom. He compares it, in the first place, to a very small seed—the mustard seed. Very insignificant, indeed; but it has the power of life within, and thus has the promise and potency of wonderful growth.

Then He compares it to leaven, whose mighty assimilating power is familiar to all. It transforms into its own nature foreign substances that come in contact with it (Matt. xiii. 31-33).

This double power of the Kingdom of God—the power of life within to renew itself and to grow, and the ability to transmute, into its own nature, things that are not kindred to itself—gives the Kingdom the

assurance of final universality and the certainty that our crucified Lord will fulfil His promise to draw all men unto Himself.

MEDITATION

Note the two-fold final Command of our Lord—to go and disciple the nations (intensive, thorough, work) and to be witnesses unto Him unto the uttermost parts of the earth (extensive work of evangelism). Both forms of work are imperative to-day in India.

STUDY VII

Conditions of Entrance into the Kingdom

4. Our Lord urges men to become subjects of His Kingdom. It is His great call to men to-day as in the past.

But no one can become a member of the Kingdom without possessing certain definite, initial qualifications.

(1) The first condition imposed by our Lord is that of Repentance. "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," was the first ringing cry of His ministry (Matt. iv. 17). Later in His ministry He rebuked the Scribes and the Pharisees because of their perversity, and declared, "The men of Nineveh shall stand up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold a greater than Jonah is here" (Matt. xii. 41; see also Luke xv. 7).

"Repent ye," is the clarion voice which calls every man to face towards the Kingdom of God and to prepare himself for its blessed privileges. As if He said, "Turn away from the sin and selfishness of life, wheel about, face God-ward and virtue-ward." This is repentance, and without it a man will always find the door of the Kingdom locked against him.

(2) In the Gospel of John our Lord presents a condition which is kindred to repentance. "Except one be born anew (or from above) he cannot see the Kingdom of God" (John iii. 3). The new birth is the God-side, and repentance is the man-side, of essentially the same process, which is the renewal of the soul on the threshold of the Kingdom.

Our Lord aptly describes it (Matt. vii. 14) as the "Narrow gate and straitened way that leadeth unto life."

MEDITATION

"Not with hatred's under tow
Doth the Love Eternal flow;
Every chain that spirits wear
Crumbles in the breath of prayer;
And the penitent's desire
Opens every gate of fire."

It is worth noting here that while, in the Gospel of John, the term 'Kingdom of God' is used only twice, the author substitutes for it the expression 'Eternal Life,' which is a characteristic and oft-recurring word of this Gospel. Study it carefully in its various connections. Considering, then, that entering into the Kingdom of God is entering into possession of eternal life, how appropriate that Jesus should speak of this entrance into that life as "the new birth."

STUDY VIII

Conditions—(continued).

(3) Another essential condition for entrance into the Kingdom of God is Faith. The word, 'believing,' is characteristic of the Gospel of John. It is found there more than ninety times; and it almost invariably refers

to believing in Christ or in God, and not in the teachings of the Kingdom. It is a personal faith in a personal Saviour. In other words it is a full acceptance of Christ in all that He promises to the soul. And without this believing act of the soul the Kingdom of God must, for ever, remain a closed door. "This is the will of My Father, that every one that beholdeth the Son and believeth on Him, should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John vi. 40; see also vs. 24).

(4) Another condition which our Lord lays down is the doing of the will of God. "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father who is in heaven" (Matt. vii. 21). A hollow, empty, faith is an abomination unto the Lord. The test of life, of penitence and of faith, is obedience. An empty confession and a smiling, assenting, hypocrisy God hates. The 'doing' of God's will is infinitely better than the 'hearing' or the 'promising' to do it. This is the rock upon which eternal life must for ever be built up in God's Kingdom (Matt. vii. 24-27). To men of words, words which are not substantiated by deeds, God will ever say, 'I never knew you' (vs. 23).

MEDITATION

By faith the soul grips the hand of love stretched to it from above and it is brought into the Kingdom.

God has no room in His Kingdom for a wordy, lazy, soul.

STUDY IX

Conditions—(concluded).

(5) Childlikeness is another trait which is demanded from those who knock at the door of His Kingdom.

“Verily I say unto you, except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. xviii. 3). “Whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein” (Mark x. 14, 15).

Without that simplicity and transparency of heart and sweet trustfulness of soul which characterises a child no one can enter into the life and into the highest activities of the heavenly Kingdom.

(6) Christ adds to these conditions still one more, a subordination of all things in thought and affection to Himself. “He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that doth not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me” (Matt. x. 37-39).

No love must be so absorbing as our love to Jesus, and no attachment must interfere with the attachment of the disciple to his great Teacher. He must find the supreme place in his heart and life. “No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt. vi. 24). Christ will have the whole of our heart or He will have none. He declines to accept the divided allegiance of any one.

MEDITATION

Blessed is the Christian who combines the simplicity of childhood with the nobility of a mature manhood.

The highest religion imposes the hardest test—that of supreme love and loyalty to its Founder.

STUDY X

Membership in the Kingdom

5. The characteristic of Membership in the Kingdom of God.

After a man has found admission and has become a true Christian, he must so live as to reveal, by his conduct, the essential characteristics of the Kingdom.

These are generally summed up in the term 'righteousness.' This Kingdom is essentially, and eminently, the reign of righteousness in the heart. Its foundation and its superstructure are distinctly ethical. Our Lord told His disciples not only that they must be righteous, but that their righteousness must exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees; otherwise they should in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. v. 20). The righteousness of the Pharisees was only skin-deep. It was a matter of outward observance merely. The members of God's Kingdom must be holy as God is holy. Holiness is the foundation of the throne of this Kingdom; and all its members must shine with the moral uprightness and with the ethical integrity which are the lustre of His reign.

This righteousness is of the heart, an inner quality of the life. "For from within, out of the heart of men, evil thoughts proceed . . . all these evil things proceed from within and defile the man" (Mark vii. 21-23). This is a very different thing from ceremonial cleanness. It touches man at the very centre of his being. It refers to the deep springs and motives of action. God takes cognizance of the inner life and motive. "When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; that thine alms may be in secret; and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee (Matt. vi. 1-4).

MEDITATION

Righteousness, like love, is a fulfilling of the law.

Righteousness is to-day, as never before since the days of Christ, the supreme test of Christian worth. Creed and ritual have, at last, taken second place.

STUDY XI**Membership in the Kingdom—(continued).**

This righteousness is, at its foundation, altruistic—it reaches out in loving efforts for others. Love, our Lord taught, is the fulfilling of the law of this Kingdom. It is the key-word of the Kingdom (Luke x. 27, 28). This love must not only be 'without dissimulation'; it must be active and reach in tender helpfulness unto all men. One of the most beautiful parables ever spoken by Jesus was that of the Good Samaritan, which was uttered by Him for the purpose of interpreting the true character of the righteousness of His Kingdom (Luke x. 30-37). It shows that this righteousness is absolutely self-forgetting and self-effacing. Without making any distinctions of race, caste, or creed it reaches out in loving helpfulness to all men that need and even to those that hate and curse while being blessed. "I say unto you, love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust" (Matt. v. 43-48).

Moreover, this righteousness abhors every form of sin and hollow pretence. It is without guile (John i. 47). It is also the transparency of a pure heart (Matt. v. 8) and is everywhere characterized by sincerity of purpose.

Our Lord particularizes, by stating that members of this Kingdom are the salt of the earth (Matt. v. 13). Note the three-fold use of salt. It is used to purify, to preserve and to season. Every member of this divine realm must, by his righteousness, be a sanctifying power among men. His life and conduct must tend to purify the morals of the community in which he lives. He must be a preserving agency. He must everywhere deter men from sin. He must be a gracious influence; everywhere his example must sweeten the life and brighten the relationship and bring joy into the society of all men.

Then, the members of the Kingdom are "the light of the world" (Matt. v. 14-16). "Even so let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Truth and grace must so blend in their life that men may study their reflected light and through it get a vision of beauty of the heavenly Father, and thereby learn to love and adore Him.

MEDITATION

Are we acting the part of the Good Samaritan in our life to-day? Our righteousness must combine the warmth of love and the light of purity. An indiscriminating love is a heavenly love. And he who exercises this love is a child of God and a true member of the Kingdom of God.

STUDY XII

Blessings of this Kingdom

6. The Blessings of this Kingdom.

We have seen that it is a Kingdom of beatitudes. 'Blessed' is the significant word that is placed above its portals.

The Kingdom itself is the greatest blessing imaginable. It is represented as a pearl of great price, to secure which a man should sell all that he has (Matt. xiii. 45-46). It is a Kingdom of true happiness; and no earthly good should stand in the way of man's full membership in it and full ownership in its privileges.

Our Lord also compares it to a royal marriage feast, to which all are cordially invited and for whom rich abundance is provided (Matt. xxii. 1-14). These blessings are both free and full. The invitation is extended to all men of all conditions. Royal messengers have gone forth and have announced the wondrous riches of this great feast of God. There is no limit to the sumptuous provision which He has made to satisfy the spiritual hunger of man in every land and age.

Earthly blessings are also a part of His gifts. "Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat; nor yet for your body, what you shall put on Seek ye His Kingdom and these things shall be added unto you" (Luke xii. 22-31). From the over-abundance of the rich gifts of this Kingdom all these lower blessings of temporal need, which constitute so large a part of men's seeking on earth, are "added unto you" (Matt. vi. 33). They are but the overflow of our Saviour's gift unto men.

MEDITATION

The choice of the highest, means the surrender of the lowest. The young man of Capernaum chose his wealth and lost an everlasting Kingdom. Consider the cost of this inheritance in Christ !

STUDY XIII

Blessings of this Kingdom—(continued).

Its chief blessings, however, are spiritual, as contrasted with temporal. The Jewish conception, in the days of our Lord, was that of a Kingdom which brought temporal advantage and earthly blessing. Even the disciples were not without this taint of earthly expectation. To expectant Peter our Lord said, "Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters or mother, or father or children, or lands for My sake and for the Gospel's sake, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brethren and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark x. 29-30). Yes, the spiritual compensations for all that a man may deny himself in behalf of the Kingdom, are a hundredfold even in this life, beside the numberless blessings of eternal life beyond. And even persecutions themselves shall be transmuted into blessings unspeakable.

The specific blessing of the Kingdom is forgiveness of sins (Luke vii. 47). Christ Himself pronounced absolution in the case of more than one that sought His blessing; and He taught every member of His Kingdom to pray for that one of the chiefest blessings in the Kingdom, "Forgive us our trespasses." A release from the bondage of the sins of the past and the possession of a new peace in the presence of God—all this brings unspeakable comfort to the forgiven soul.

In the fourth Gospel the term, 'eternal life,' as we have seen, is used as an apparent equivalent for the

'Kingdom of God.' And it expresses with deepest significance the highest blessing of the Kingdom. Life in God, and life with God, eternal life, overflowing with the exuberance of its unending and heavenly joy—this it is which represents the supreme blessing offered to every one who enters the Kingdom of God. "My sheep hear My voice and I know them and they follow Me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish and no one shall snatch them out of My hand" (John x. 27-28).

MEDITATION

*The peace of forgiveness is the unique blessing of our faith. Contrast it with the heathen relentless doctrine of **Karma** among Hindus and Buddhists. A religion that offers no forgiveness to the sinner cannot be final or true.*

CHAPTER V

JESUS' TEACHING CONCERNING MAN

STUDY I

Man Supreme among God's Creatures

In the eyes of our Lord man stands supreme among earthly creatures.

God, indeed, cares for the flowers of the field; He beautifies them with His heavenly touch. But what are they as compared with him for whose life He constantly provides, and whom He daily nourishes with a father's care? "If God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" (Matt. vi. 28-30).

He careth for the sparrows, doth He not? "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny, and not one of them

shall fall on the ground without your Father ; but the very hairs of your head are all numbered " (Matt. x. 29-31).

Or look at the sheep, which are the objects of the care of God and man. "How much then is a man of more value than a sheep?" (Matt. xii. 12).

Yea, even place the whole world in the scales as against one human being, and it is as nothing. "For what shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world and forfeit his life? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his life?" (Matt. xvi. 26).

Or consider again that wonderful series of parables in Luke xv.; where the rescue of the human soul is represented as worthy of the supreme effort of Heaven; and where its redemption is a theme of joy which thrills the inhabitants of Heaven.

Indeed, the supreme condescension and suffering of Christ may be said to bear definite relation and proportion to the divine value placed upon the human soul.

MEDITATION

The infinite value of the human soul is a foundation stone of the Kingdom. He said that man is infinitely worth saving; and He paid the cost by the death of the cross. We value man for the accidents of his life; Christ alone saw the soul's own preciousness.

STUDY II

Man is the Son of God

(1) Jesus recognizes man as the son of God.

The parable of the Prodigal son (Luke xv.) beautifully conveys this thought, which is the correlative of the universal Fatherhood of God. One, indeed, is as important a revelation as the other.

Covered with rags and tatters, besotted with sin, degraded by the companionship of swine and emaciated beyond recognition by spiritual hunger, he is still presented before our eyes as the son of God. Our Lord traces him back to his divine parentage; and He reveals the wonderful promise and potency which lie in that neglected, forgotten sonship. He shows that man, though polluted and demented with sin, can nevertheless, 'come to himself'; that he has not so utterly lost the sense of his kinship with God and the divine lineaments that he cannot say—"I will arise and go unto my father"; that he is not so insensible to the cruel injustice of his position as not to be able to feel the pang of repentance and the satisfaction of confession to his Father—"Father, I have sinned against Heaven and in thy sight, I am no more worthy to be called thy son."

Yes, Christ did more than any one else in the whole history of the world, to reveal the glory of human nature and its celestial possibilities. He showed that man belongs to God by eternal ties of kinship; and that his Father's house is his lost home and heritage, which he should seek to re-enter, and where alone there remains for him fulness of blessing and joy for evermore.

MEDITATION

Heaven alone knows the lowest degradation of fallen man and his highest possibilities. From the bestial to the celestial, man is to compass the whole gamut of rational life.

STUDY III

He is a Prodigal Son

(2) And yet, in this same parable, Christ emphasizes the fact that this son is a prodigal—a lost son. He is,

indeed, a son of heaven; and yet he has, by his own wilfulness and selfishness, become mean, earthly, sensual, and has, by his sin, disinherited himself. By his rebellious, unfilial, spirit he has become the child of disobedience and sin and has begotten within himself all the traits and miseries of hell. It was to save such a one that Christ came and tabernacled among men. "The Son of Man came to seek and save that which was lost" (Luke xix. 10).

See how our Lord further describes this man whom He had come to save.

(a) He is full of sin—a foul sink of iniquity. "For from within, out of the heart of men, evil thoughts proceed, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, covetings, wickednesses, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, railing, pride, foolishness; all these evil things proceed from within and defile the man" (Mark vii. 21-23). This catalogue of abominations shows that his depravity is complete. It is the prodigal again, not only covered with rags, but the companion of swine and eagerly desiring the husks the swine do eat.

(b) Our Lord also taught that man is a slave to sin. "Verily, verily I say unto you, everyone that committeth sin is the bond-servant of sin. And the bond-servant abideth not in the house for ever" (John viii. 34, 35). Sin is the greatest tyrant, and most cruel bond-master, ever known. Its iron fetters are as strong as they are galling. There is no more abject and helpless being upon earth than a man who has, for years, worn the fetters of sin. And the culmination of the evil is found in the fact that the sinner, like the prisoner of Chillon, grows to love his chains and will not part with them.

MEDITATION

Strange that He who never knew sin in His own heart should give the most vivid description of its abominations. He knew the disease which He came to heal, the filth from which He came to cleanse the soul.

STUDY IV

The Child of the Devil

(c) Man is also called the child of the Devil. The Lord turns upon His assailants, the ever-vigilant Pharisees, and charges them with being "The children of the devil," "And the lusts of your father it is your will to do" (John viii. 44). It is sad enough to see a child of poverty and of filth born into the slums of a great city, or among a barbarous, heathenish people. But it is much worse to see the child of a king lost and adopted in infancy by a beggar and hardened to all the sins and gross habits of a foul environment. And yet, this is the condition of man, the son of the King of Kings, and yet the voluntary son of hell. While he knows his heavenly parentage, he prefers to play the wanton life of sin as the child of his chosen father, the devil.

And the Lord emphasized this relationship of man to the evil one, because he partook of his character. "Like child, like father."

For the man so overwhelmed by sin, bound to it by his own lust, fettered by a chain of evil habits, and by Satan's influence in his life—to such an one nothing less than a complete regeneration, or a new birth, will suffice for his redemption. Hence the emphatic call of Jesus upon all men, even upon the morally upright Nicodemus, to be "born from above," without

which he cannot even "see the Kingdom of God" (John iii. 3).

On another occasion the Lord answered His opponents' taunts, in view of His friendship with the Publicans, by stating that "they that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick" (Mark ii. 17). He came not to call the righteous—that is, such as regard themselves as morally whole—but the outcast sinners, to repentance. In other words, our Lord regarded unregenerate man as a soul-sick man who is in need of a physician. And it was His purpose to apply to him His heavenly remedies for the healing of that soul.

It is to the world of lost sons, of unregenerate men ("The poor and maimed, and blind and lame," Luke xiv. 21) that God's urgent message has been sent.

MEDITATION

For the despised, outcast, sinner of the slums the Lord had infinite compassion and only words of tender helpfulness; for the complacent, conceited hypocrite of polite society He entertained abhorrence and spoke words of bitterness. To the one He said, "Come and sin no more"; to the other, "Woe unto thee, thou child of a viper." Why this difference?

STUDY V

Jesus' Teaching about Children

(3) In this connection it is interesting to consider Jesus' teaching about little children.

In harmony with His teaching about the heavenly sonship of man He taught that little children were members of His Kingdom. "Suffer the little children to come unto me: forbid them not; for to such

belongeth the Kingdom of God" (Mark x. 14). He loved the little ones passionately and "took them in His arms and blessed them, laying His hands upon them" (vs. 16). And more than once, when wearied by the weaknesses and the meannesses of His disciples, "He called to Him a little child and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. . . . And who-so shall receive one such little child in My name receiveth Me" (Matt. xviii. 2-6). And again He saith unto them on another occasion, with a view to rebuking their obstinate pride, having placed a little child before them, "Whosoever shall receive this little child in My name receiveth Me; and whosoever shall receive Me receiveth Him that sent Me. For he that is least among you all, the same is great" (Luke ix. 48).

Considering all these words of our Lord we are impressed by His high appreciation of child-nature and child-life. He had no hesitation in ascribing to them the qualities, and in claiming for them the blessings, of the Kingdom of Heaven.

MEDITATION

The child mind and child life appealed to our Lord. He took children into His arms and heart and blessed them. Whom He blesses let not man curse. Let not man consign to perdition those of whom He said—"of such is the Kingdom of God."

CHAPTER VI

OUR LORD'S TEACHING CONCERNING
THE DISCIPLE

STUDY I

The Disciple

Jesus looked upon the believer as a man who is saved, rescued from sin and Satan. He is also the child of the heavenly Father and a member of the Kingdom of Heaven.

But He chiefly regarded him as His disciple. He was the great Teacher, and it was His purpose and desire to train His own for the great life of the Kingdom, both for time and eternity.

This relationship of the Rabbi and disciple was one that largely gave colour and character to the Gospel-message. Every Jewish Rabbi gathered around himself a body of disciples, intimately connected with himself; and he regularly imparted instruction to them. Our Lord also selected the few, the chosen Twelve, whom He called His disciples, the training of whom gradually became His supreme object as His ministry drew towards its close.

The great Teacher's instructions to His disciples were two-fold. "His great formative agencies were speech and fellowship. His words created a new world within and around His disciples, filled their minds with new thought, aims, ideals, hopes To hear His daily speech was not simply to receive His thoughts, but to share, as it were, the inmost life of His Spirit To stand within the Holy of Holies, and listen to the

soft, yet awful, voice telling the highest mysteries, speaking the last secrets of the unknown * * *. His words came to them explained by a living and articulate commentary. To hear His speech was to enjoy His fellowship; and His fellowship created the sense that understood His speech. Fellowship is the most potent educative agency, and its highest potency was realized in the society which knew by experience what spiritual forces were embodied in the Christ.”*

Thus Jesus taught His disciples daily by the light of His wisdom and by the warmth of His fellowship.

And the name “disciple” has appropriately come down the ages as the name which best characterizes the follower of Jesus.

We will now consider some of the special lessons which Christ taught concerning the disciple, who has accepted Him as Saviour and who is thirsting for His guidance and wisdom that he may live a good and a worthy life.

MEDITATION

Like the Twelve, we all must be disciples first ere we can be apostles. From an humble place at His feet He will send us forth to His service. But we must never cease to learn. Do Christians to-day realize the supreme importance of docility—an open ear and a teachable heart?

STUDY II

The Disciple must be Teachable

(1) The first lesson to be learned by the disciple is that of docility or teachableness.

* Fairbairn—“Studies in the Life of Christ,” pages 134-135.

Perhaps Mary represents to us the ideal disciple in this particular. While Martha exercised herself in bustling service, Mary "sat at the Lord's feet and heard His word" (Luke x. 39). She was the receptive, docile one who never allowed a word of the great Teacher to pass by unheeded.

Our Lord expects audience and attention from His own. How many times do we hear Him exclaim, "He that hath ears to hear let him hear" (Matt. xi. 15). On one occasion He addressed them in the well-known words of the parable of the Sower (Matt. xiii. 3-8). In the impartation of His truth, in the sowing of the divine seed, how few minds there were that were characterized by thoughtfulness and receptivity! The hardened wayside, the rocky soil, the thorny patches—these much more frequently characterize the mind of the disciple than the good soil where the seed grows and bears an abundant harvest of thoughtfulness and appreciation.

Or, listen to the parable of the Wheat and the Tares, according to which, in man's listless moments, the enemy scatters his seed of evil which chokes and destroys the good (Matt. xiii. 24-30).

In a moment of impatience, at the dullness and slowness of the Twelve to learn the most elementary lesson of life, our Lord suddenly rises, and by an action parable tries to teach them the unwelcome lesson of humility. Laying aside His garments, He girded Himself with a towel and washed the reluctant disciples' feet. Then He sat down and said unto them,—"Ye call Me Teacher and Lord; and ye say well, for so I am. And if I, then, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet ye also ought to wash one another's

feet. For I have given you an example that ye also should do as I have done unto you" (John xiii. 4-16).

Thus Christ expected from His disciple a teachable mind—a docility that would take in all the lessons of His teaching and example.

It is almost pathetic to see His eagerness to impart His lessons of truth and of life. He had to hold back truth because of the limitations of the disciples. "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now" (John xvi. 12).

MEDITATION

"Oh! Master, let me walk with Thee

In lowly paths of service free;

Tell me Thy secret; help me bear

The strain of toil, the fret of care.

Teach me Thy patience; still with Thee

In closer, dearer company,

In work that keeps faith sweet and strong,

In trust that triumphs over wrong."

STUDY III

The Disciple a Follower of Jesus

(2) The disciple is one who follows Jesus. His first word of invitation and of command unto those who seek life in Him is,—“Follow me.” How often, as He unites souls unto Himself for time and eternity, He does it in these words?—“Come, follow me” (Matt. iv. 19; viii. 22; ix. 9; John i. 43).

What does it mean to follow Jesus?

(a) It is imitating Jesus, or walking in His footsteps. The Apostle Peter speaks of Christ having “suffered for you, leaving you an example that ye should follow His steps” (1 Peter ii. 21). Jesus said,—

"It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Teacher" (Matt. x. 25). He must pass through the same opposition and persecution as his Lord. Behold the two disciples come unto Him, seeking preferment in His Kingdom. This test question was given to them—"Are ye able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" (Matt. xx. 22). That is, "Are ye ready to follow Me into the valley of My deepest suffering?" It is indeed true that the disciples knew not what they asked. But the Lord pointed to the fact that it was only by following Him that they could ever expect distinction in His Kingdom. In recent times we have read that very popular book called, "In His Steps," or, "What would Jesus do." We there saw the trials, difficulties and complications in which those became involved, who tried, faithfully, to follow in the steps of Jesus.

And yet, herein lies the very essence of discipleship—to follow Jesus, not in the petty details of His life, but in the general principles of His conduct, and to do what we earnestly believe He Himself would do if He were in our circumstances.

And even as He, Himself, made His Father's will the supreme test and rule of His life, so must the disciple. Jesus, in the prayer which He taught us, made "Thy will be done" to be the disciples' daily petition.

Thus, in this, and in all the details of life, it must be the constant aim of the disciple to test his life by our Lord's and to walk in His steps and follow Him.

MEDITATION

Consider the great difficulty of following Jesus.

It involves absolute loyalty to Him, a prayerful waiting for the revelation of His will in the perplexing details of

life; and a relentless purpose to follow wherever His wisdom lead us against the whisperings of our own ease and convenience.

STUDY IV

The Disciple a Follower of Jesus—(continued).

(b) To follow Jesus means to substitute Him for self as an aim in life.

It is not the gratification of self, but the pleasing of our Lord which should animate the disciple in all matters of life and conduct. When it becomes a choice between this world and its interests, on the one hand, and Christ's and His Kingdom, on the other, the disciple must, without hesitation, decide for the latter. When He called Peter and Andrew to follow Him we read that they left all and followed Him (Luke v. 11). And Levi, likewise, in response to His commands, "Forsook all and rose up and followed Him" (vs. 28). The young ruler of Capernaum failed in this test, and rather than obey the Teacher, in surrendering his earthly goods which were a stumbling block to him, he declined to obey. He loved his riches more than Jesus (Luke xviii. 18-23). When it comes to a choice of ideals, of loves, of masters, Jesus must be supreme, He must be followed. "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me * * * and he that doth not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me" (Matt. x. 37-38). Yea, it even may be put in the more vigorous form of Luke's Gospel,—“If any man cometh unto Me and hateth not his own father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple” (Luke xiv. 26). Discipleship means always an enthroning of Christ in

the heart as the supreme Master and the only rule and ideal of life. This is the highest test of discipleship.

MEDITATION

Let us "Look unto Jesus" that we may get from Him the Secret of Contentment and Power.

"Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow Thee;
Destitute, despised, forsaken,
Thou, from hence, my all shall be."

STUDY V

The Disciple a Follower of Jesus—(concluded).

(c) The disciple takes Christ's word as his guide and highest wisdom in life. To the Jews our Lord said, on one occasion, "If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly My disciples" (John viii. 31). In laying down the principles of His Kingdom and of true discipleship in the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord, with an emphatic, "I say unto you," exalts supremely His own teaching above that of all Jewish writers and of Moses himself. And it is well that He did so; for, as He said elsewhere, "The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life" (John vi. 63). And, as an echo to these words, was uttered the confession of Simon Peter,—“Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life” (John vi. 68).

Following Jesus was represented by Him as a matter of great urgency. A disciple wished to excuse himself that he might first go and attend to the obsequies of his father. But our Lord said unto him,—“Follow Me; and leave the dead to bury their own dead” (Matt. viii. 21-22). Even the most sacred obligations and most

pressing duties of human life must give way to the urgency of Christian discipleship (Luke ix. 60).

Nor does Jesus permit divided interests or diverting sentiments to interfere with this duty of discipleship. A man must follow Jesus with singleness of purpose and with whole-souled absorption. "I will follow Thee, Lord," said another, "but first suffer me to bid farewell to them that are at my house," but Jesus said unto him, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God" (Luke ix. 61-62).

MEDITATION

"Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." How far is Christ's word the teacher and the guide of our soul in the affairs of life?

STUDY VI

The Disciple a Cross Bearer

(3) The disciple must take up his cross and deny himself. Self-denial is a prime characteristic of Christianity. The cross is rightly the emblem of our faith; not simply because Christ bore our sins upon the cross; but also because the Christian life is in itself a life of cross-bearing. Every Christian has his own cross and he must bravely take it up and follow Christ (Mark viii. 34; Matt. x. 38; Luke xiv. 27). "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me."

To bear one's cross is to follow Christ down into the deepest valley of self-abnegation and self-effacement.

It means a complete surrender of self—

(a) As the object of one's life. Self must cease to be the supreme end of one's activity. It must no

longer be the centre round which the disciple's ambitions and efforts for ever revolve.

(b) The cross means also the surrender of self—self-will—as the directing power in life. The disciple in his self-denial buries his own pride and conceit of will; and upon its grave he accepts the will of Christ as the controlling power of his life.

Self, whether it be self-will, self-love or self-seeking, is the principal enemy of the disciple and the source of all his trouble.

Self-denial does not mean asceticism, as Hindus are wont to think. Hindus and many Christians think that asceticism is the highest and the most acceptable form of self-denial. On the other hand, Jesus discouraged asceticism by His own example. He separated Himself from the numerous class of ascetics of His day. And for this reason He was called “a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners” (Matt xi. 19). On one occasion John's disciples complained because the disciples of our Lord did not practise the common asceticism of the day, fasting, as other pietists of the day did. But our Lord contended that the cheerful, happy characteristics of Christianity neither demanded, nor were consonant with, the sombre traits of asceticism (Mark ii. 18-19).

The cross of self-denial rather finds its realization in the overcoming of the lower and baser elements of one's nature in order that the higher and the spiritual powers may find their full strength and perfect use.

The cross [also is to the Christian the emblem of complete dedication. The cross of Christ is the fulfilment of the old Jewish sin-offering. The cross of every Christian represents the whole burnt offering,

the complete self-dedication, or self-sacrifice, of the soul upon the altar of Christ.

In this losing of self in service can the disciple find his highest joy and perfect self-realization. "For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for My sake shall find it" (Matt. xvi. 25; Mark viii. 35).

The Christian's cross finds its ultimate realization in the crown. No disciple has ever faithfully borne the cross upon his back without ultimately enjoying the lustre of the crown upon his brow.

MEDITATION

*Let us not confuse the cross of Jesus with our own cross. On His cross He died **for** sin. Under our cross we die **unto** sin. Christ bore His cross as our Example. He was borne by His cross as our Sacrifice and Redeemer.*

STUDY VII

The Disciple and Sincerity

(4) The disciple must be characterized by true sincerity.

Our Lord abhorred hollow pretence and hypocrisy; and the most bitter words of denunciation which ever fell from His lips were against the religious cant and hypocrisy of the Scribes and the Pharisees. His words of woe, against that class, are among the most vehemence of any literature (Matt. xxiii. 13; Luke xi. 44). Insincerity is not only the blackest sin in itself; it is also the foster mother of a thousand sins. It also specially destroys the moral sense and depraves the soul.

Such hypocrisy shuts men out of the true Kingdom and makes of them "Sons of hell" (Matt. xxiii. 15).

In the Sermon on the Mount our Lord emphasizes the need of transparent sincerity in three separate departments of religious life—departments which are specially liable to hypocrisy.

(a) In Matt. vi. 2-4, He enjoins upon His disciples the duty of avoiding display in the bestowal of their charity and of their offerings. How easy for our pretence to outrun our real attainments! The grace of charity is so attractive that men are ever eager to counterfeit it. Many are not only willing to receive credit from their fellowmen for all that they bestow; they even desire more than is their due; and it is this itching for human praise which is the mother of hypocrisy. Our Lord knew the temptation which beset, and which still besets, the ordinary disciple in the giving of his alms and offerings. He one day stood beside the treasury in the Temple studying human nature. He was disgusted with the pomp and display of the wealthy and sanctimonious, as they dropped in their niggardly gifts. He saw also a poor, timid, but generous and grateful widow bring and give unto the Lord her only mite. She made display neither of her poverty nor of her whole-souled consecration of all that she had unto the Lord. But the Lord knew it all and gave world-wide glory to the genuine offering, deep sincerity and all-absorbing gratitude of this child of poverty. What a contrast to this was the hollow pretence of Judas, as he expressed a deep concern for the poor, in view of Mary's loving offering to the Lord! But the Lord knew the love of the widow and the insincerity of Judas, alike. And in these words He proclaims the blessedness of him who doeth alms in secret, without any blowing of

trumpets and without any seeking of human praise. For "thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee."

MEDITATION

Sincerity is the touchstone of piety. Without it Spiritual life is impossible. Insincerity is the author of all the tinsel trappings of religion and is the enemy of all spiritual gifts. How many of our Christian efforts and offerings are entirely free from love of display and the craving for undue praise?

STUDY VIII

The Disciple and Sincerity—(continued).

(b) In vss. 5-15, Jesus emphasizes, with greater detail, the danger of insincerity in prayer. One would suppose that, of all things, the sacred privilege of prayer, of deep communion with God, is that which would be least tainted with hypocrisy and display. And yet our Lord knew, and had daily opportunity to witness among the Pharisees, how easily prayer could descend into empty verbiage. He knew that Jews and Christians would be quite ready to believe that a prayer might be answered for its long face and its multiplicity of words, just as the Hindu, by oft-repeating his *Mantrams* and his *Hari Hara*, expects to accumulate merit with his gods. See the Roman Catholic Christian counting his "Ave Marias" upon his rosary, believing that every repetition adds a blessing, apart from any of the spirit of true prayer! And so, likewise, do numberless Protestants of all ranks fall into the error of believing that they "shall be heard for their much speaking." Such prayer is rather addressed unto men than to God. It is a part of the ostentation of hypocrisy. But it never appeals to God. It rises no higher than

the lips which utter it. The true prayer of sincerity is the only prayer that finds answer with our Father. And such prayer covets not publicity, but seeks the retirement of privacy, where God only sees the heart and can hear the voice. Therefore, "When thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber and having shut thy door pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee."

MEDITATION

God forgive us for the many empty words which embellish our prayers. There is no temptation more general than that to insincerity in prayer—to use words which find no corresponding sentiment in the heart—to cover our spiritual defects by the cloak of a high sounding but lying phraseology.

STUDY IX

The Disciple and Sincerity—(concluded).

(c) Furthermore, Jesus (vss. 16-18) enjoins sincerity in the religious act of fasting.

Our Lord never commanded His disciples to fast; but He did clearly say that, if one wishes to fast, he must do it in all sincerity. As if He said, "Seek not to impress men by vain show with your asceticism. Think not that the mere act of abstaining from food has any value, apart from the humbling of the heart. Better is it to conceal your mourning by signs of joy and festivity than to wear the emblems of your asceticism for display before men. "When thou fastest, anoint thy head and wash thy face, that thou be not seen of men to fast, but of thy Father who is in secret."

The great lesson of these three-fold words of our Lord is that the disciple must, in all his religious life

and observances, cultivate sincerity by rendering them only unto the Lord who knoweth the heart and trieth the reins of men. There must be no posing for the approbation of man. God rewards us only according to the deepest *motives* of our religious activities.

Truth in the inward parts is what Christ demands from every disciple. Truth, as against duplicity and as opposed to every hollow display, is the first claim upon the disciple. "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John viii. 32). The truth of sincerity is the only thing that can bring the soul freedom and peace in the divine presence. "The hour cometh and now is when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such doth the Father seek to be His worshippers" (John iv. 23).

MEDITATION

The folly of insincerity in religion is that it aims to please the wrong person—man instead of God.

If religious austerity appears to you of value, the least you can do is so to practice it that it may commend itself to God who sees the heart and rewards accordingly. The long-faced Pharisee, with his sackcloth and ashes, is the prototype of a host of modern hypocrites.

STUDY X

The Disciple and Faithfulness

(5) The disciple must be faithful.

Faithfulness is one of the chief badges of the Christian. Jesus taught that faithfulness to one's trust as a steward of God was a matter of prime importance (Matt. xxv. 21).

In the wonderful series of parables concerning the future, which our Lord delivered to His disciples, upon

the Mount of Olives, the key-word to the three parables is "faithfulness."

(a) In the parable of the Ten Virgins (Matt. xxv. 1-13). He emphasizes the duty of being faithful to one's self. How easily men deceive themselves and lull themselves into a false security. Instead of examining themselves, faithfully, and understanding the condition of their heart before God, they silence their conscience with false assumptions until the final day of evil befalls them. The foolish virgins had made all preparations, but one, for the coming of the bridegroom. That defect was fundamental and fatal. Instead of providing themselves with oil, they thought foolishly that, in some way or other, they might secure it when the bridegroom came, or, forsooth, would not need it!

How many disciples are thus wanting in faithful dealing with themselves. Though they fail to make their peace with God and have not the oil of faith in their hearts, by a thousand vain excuses they justify themselves in their delay to secure it, until the day of opportunity is past and their doom is sealed.

(b) Faithfulness to the heavenly Master (ch. xxv. 14-30).

Here, in the parable of the Talents, the scene is changed and the obligation of faithfulness to our heavenly Master is presented before us. The Master, upon His departure, gives to each servant talents, the number of which corresponds with his ability to use them, commands each to be faithful as a steward of His house, and leaves for another land. Two were faithful to their Lord, and upon His return presented to Him the results of their loyalty and faithfulness, and

received from Him the welcome plaudit, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Every disciple is entrusted with peculiar gifts and blessings from his heavenly Master. He is not asked to be brilliant or clever in the use of those gifts; that would not be possible to all. But he is required to be faithful; and upon that faithfulness alone will depend the character of his reception by his heavenly Master at the last day. On that day he will demand an account from every one; and even the man of one talent, of least ability and opportunity, will find a welcome reception, and the same welcome reception as the best endowed, if he has only been faithful in his Master's business.

MEDITATION

Sincerity is the first principle of a good life. Faithfulness is the right attention to all the details of every day life. God asks of every one only a reasonable interest on the principal which He has invested in him. Be it much or little, He demands that we be faithful and cordial in its return to Him—principal and interest.

STUDY XI

The Disciple and Faithfulness—(continued).

(c) Faithfulness in his service to men.

That parable of the great Judgment Day (xxv. 31-46) carries many lessons of importance, but none greater than that of the need of faithfulness in the performance of our duties to our fellowmen. And that supreme duty is expressed in the word "Love." It is an interesting fact that the basis of the final judgment is expressed in the terms of a loving treatment of the least of our

fellowmen. We often deceive ourselves into thinking that we are generous, kind and loving because we do kind deeds to our superiors and our equals. But when our acts are analysed they are found to possess little or no love. They are largely conventional or selfish. When a man treats kindly and generously his well-to-do neighbour, it is very likely that he does this in view of favours already enjoyed or of blessings expected from him, or because the conventionalities of society demand it from him. There is no altruism, no loving impulse, in his act. How then shall we test a man in his relationship with his fellowmen? How shall we know whether his love is outgoing, or whether he is selfish, whether he is true and faithful to his vow to "love his neighbour as himself"? It must be found in his attitude towards the lowly, the needy and the helpless. Have we dealt kindly, have we lovingly imparted our gifts and ourselves, unto these submerged members of our race? If so, then surely our faithfulness to our social obligations is proved beyond a doubt. "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these My brethren, even these least, ye did it unto Me." "Your efforts to bless and to lovingly help the lowest and the least among men has tested your love and proved your faithfulness to your duties towards your fellowmen and has been accepted by Me. What ye have wrought for them ye have done unto Me."

Faithfulness in small things is a matter of great importance. Most men fail at this point. They are willing to perform well great duties, but are prone to neglect and overlook the so-called small things that belong to the every-day duties of life. Nothing is more dangerous or can be more fatal to the success of

the Christian. Jesus reminds us that "He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much. And he that is unrighteous in a very little is unrighteous also in much" (Luke xvi. 10). The real test of life is not in its great performances, but in the little duties and responsibilities which daily come unto us. Yea, more, who can call anything little that may have its roots deep down in those habits of life which form or destroy character?

MEDITATION

"Ye have done it unto Me"—wonderful words! Service for the lowly is eminently service for Jesus. We find Him among these "least of My brethren," and He becomes the object and reward of any effort for them.

The most damning folly of man is to call any act in life unimportant. Every word or act has its roots back in eternity; and its fruit of sweetness or bitterness will bring joy or sorrow in the eternity beyond.

STUDY XII

The Disciple and Prayer

(6) The disciple must be a man of prayer.

Prayer is an expression of the soul's dependence upon God. It is beautifully expressed in the hymn,

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed;
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast."

Prayer is the avenue of the soul's access to, and communion with, God, as it is also the way of the traffic of blessings from God to the soul.

Can God answer prayer? This question has often been asked even by doubting Christians. By this they mean, "Can or will God violate the rules of nature in order to answer the petitions of His people?" To this question there is but one answer. God will not violate His laws of nature. But He has power to use these laws and He constantly does use them in answering the prayers of His own. He has power to put into the minds of men such thoughts and to bring into their lives such actions, as will answer the prayers of His people. He has so adjusted physical nature that, in harmony with all its laws, it will respond to the earnest prayers of His people in all lands. If one man can answer the prayer of another without violating any of the laws of nature, even though he may have to utilize those laws, cannot the Creator and Ruler of all do the same when His children cry unto Him?

Christ Himself was a 'man of prayer.' His communion with the Father was constant. His habit of prayer was the strongest habit of His earthly life. He spent whole nights in this spiritual intercourse with His Father. The Garden of Gethsemane was known as His habitual place of prayer (John xviii. 2). See Him in the deepest agony of prayer on that wonderful night in the shades of the Olive trees of Gethsemane.

MEDITATION

To question the validity and objective power of prayer is to confess one's own spiritual incapacity. It is the blind declaiming against the beauty of nature, and the deaf denying the inspiration of music.

He who has not prayed is less than a man. He is shut out of the world of spiritual light and blessing which has been the joy of the best men of all ages.

STUDY XIII

The Disciple and Prayer—(continued).

(a) Knowing by experience the need and blessing of prayer, Jesus frequently taught His disciples its importance in their own lives. "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation" (Matt. xxvi. 41; Mark xiii. 33). He knew that the spiritual nourishment, which brings strength to overcome every subtle temptation, comes into the heart through the avenue of prayer.

(b) He taught His disciples how to pray, in response to their request (Matt. vi. 9; Luke xi. 1, 2). That incomparable prayer, which He framed for them and which has become, as it were, the breath of life to countless millions of disciples throughout the centuries, is beautiful in its appropriateness, as it is rich in its fulness of suggestion to every praying soul. It opens with its three petitions for God and His Kingdom, and closes with three more for the soul itself. It lifts up the heart, seeking, first, that God's own glory, His loving plans for man and His purpose in the life of all His creatures, may increasingly prevail throughout the world; and, next, that the same Father may bestow upon the petitioner earthly blessings, forgiveness of the sins of the past, and help to overcome the temptations of the future.

(c) He taught the disciples what they should pray for.

Besides the petition of His model prayer, He elsewhere taught that we should pray lest we enter into temptation. We live in a world of temptation and are surrounded by the meshes of the evil one. "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. xxvi. 41). The

appeal of sensual objects without and of sensuality within, is more than the weak soul can stand, and it must ever keep in the attitude of watchfulness and of prayer.

He also taught the disciples to pray for their enemies. It is the only antidote to the bitterness of hate. The Christian must meet hatred with a forgiving spirit, and overcome the cruelty of persecution with loving invocations for the persecutor (Matt. v. 43-48).

He also taught the disciples to pray for the Kingdom of God. Not only in the notable petition "Thy Kingdom come"; but He also caused them to lift up their eyes to behold the greatness of the harvest of souls which is to be gathered into the Kingdom; and the need that God should send more workers into His great harvest service (Matt. ix. 37, 38). How tender His thought as He looked with compassion upon the untaught, and spiritually unfed, multitudes before Him! "They were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd" (vs. 36).

MEDITATION

We call it "The Lord's Prayer." How far do we make it our own—the expression of our heart's yearning? The Kingdom of God above us, about us and within us must be the great theme of our soul's petitions.

You can measure your piety and understand its complexion by the character of your spontaneous prayers. Prayer is as liable as our conduct to become self-seeking, and therefore should be watched.

STUDY XIV

The Disciple and Prayer—(continued).

(d) He presented to the disciples the characteristics of effectual prayer. The disciple must offer only

such prayer as will gain the audience of Heaven and bring down an answer of blessing to man. He who would pray with such results must first learn what are the elements of successful prayer. These are:—

(1) Simplicity (Matt. vi. 7, 8). Prayer must be simple with the simplicity of childhood. Not to multiply words, but to ask just what is needed in such words only as will express the need. The hungry child does not multiply words in the presence of his mother; he asks with directness and earnestness for that which concerns him at the moment. The disciple's felt need of blessing is often obscured, if not entirely hidden, by the elaborate details and the verbosity of his prayer.

(2) He must also ask with directness and singleness of aim. This is absolutely necessary, as a condition of earnestness in prayer. Kindred to multiplicity of words in prayer, is a very mixed perception and a dim realization of what he really wants. The successful prayer must have one dominant idea, one great burden of soul, one single, supreme, object which gives it intensity, point and power. A hunter will never shoot without taking a definite aim at a single object.

(3) Faith is often mentioned by our Lord as a prime requisite of true prayer. "According to your faith be it unto you," was a common expression of our Lord. "Believe ye that I am able to do this? * * * . According to your faith be it done unto you" (Matt. ix. 28, 29). "Have faith in God. Verily I say unto you * * * all things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark xi. 22-24). Well did the disciples pray unto Him, "Lord increase our faith" (Luke xvii. 5). For Jesus taught that the proportion of the petitioner's

faith is the measure of the results which His prayer achieves with God.

MEDITATION

“There is a power which man can wield,
When mortal aid is vain,
God’s eye, His arm, His love to reach,
His listening ear to gain.
That power is prayer, which soars on high
Through Jesus to the throne,
And moves the hand, which moves the world,
To bring salvation down.”

STUDY XV

The Disciple and Prayer—(continued).

(4) Through the touching parable of the widow and the unjust judge, our Lord emphasized the need of continuance in prayer (Luke xviii. 1-8). Nothing indicates more surely the depths of one’s sincerity in prayer than his persistence and perseverance in seeking a blessing. He who seeks a great gift from God, and forgets it the next hour after he has offered his prayer, has not prayed at all. The need indicated by his petition has not gripped him, and the prayer is a mere surface request of the soul. The widow wearied the judge by her continued asking for justice at his hands. She pleaded until she prevailed. Jacob struggled all night with God. If a blessing is worth asking at all, it is worth seeking persistently until it comes. “I will not let thee go until thou bless me,” represents the only attitude of mind which creates prevailing, conquering, prayer. Let it not be thought that this parable, in any way, indicates God’s unwillingness to answer prayer. He is more willing to give than we are to ask. But He does love to test our

sincerity and our earnestness in prayer by withholding the blessing until we have proved our worthiness, by continued asking, to receive it. A strong prayer is the prayer that ends not until it rejoices in the answer however long it may be in coming.

MEDITATION

*Want of perseverance in prayer is essentially a want of faith. "When the Son of Man cometh shall He find **the faith** (the faith to receive the blessing) on earth?"*

If God descended to answer many of our prayers He would find our hearts closed by our unbelief.

How long and longingly have you prayed for anything?

STUDY XVI

The Disciple and Prayer—(continued).

(5) Humility is essential to effectual prayer. We see this in our Lord's parable about the Pharisee and the humble Publican going to the temple to pray (Luke xviii. 9-14). "Everyone that exalteth himself shall be humbled; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." God's throne of grace must be approached by every one with a deep sense of his unworthiness and sin. It ill becomes any mortal to come before God in prayer, if haughty of mien or proud of his own achievement, or satisfied with his own attainment. The only place for the man of prayer is in the dust at God's feet, not daring to lift up his eyes, but, with sincere and abject confession of his sins, to seek the blessings that he needs. Such, and such only, gain the ear of Heaven, and find blessing in prayer.

(6) The prayer of power is also the prayer that is offered in Christ's name (John xiv. 13-14). "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name that will I do, that the

Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, that will I do." Just as the highest Christian activity is exercised "for Jesus' sake," so must the deepest prayer be offered "in Jesus' name." The use of His name, if rightly used, is the assurance of success in prayer. It is the signature of the Lord to a draft on Heaven's bank. It will always be honoured at the throne above.

But it is not all men, not all Christians, who have a right to use Jesus' name in their prayers. How can a man, who daily, consciously, sins against Him, feel that he has a right to use the holy Name? Will the king give to a man a right to use his name if he knows him to be disloyal? It is when a Christian has learned to subordinate his every thought and purpose into subjection unto the will of Christ, and when his whole soul is filled with a passion to fulfil Christ's purpose in his life—it is then that he can use the name of Christ, and use it with power and with the definite assurance that "*Whatsoever*" he may ask God in Jesus' name he shall receive. There are no 'ifs' or 'buts' about it. Christ gives an unqualified assurance of answer to such prayers.

MEDITATION

How void of thought, often, are these words "In Jesus' name," at the end of our prayers! And yet they constitute the assurance that those prayers will be heard. It is the placing of Christ's signature upon our draft upon God. Have we a right to use it, and do we use it with love and appreciation? If not, it is rather a dead weight to our prayers than a motive power to carry them to heaven.

STUDY XVII

The Disciple and Prayer—(continued).

(7) Jesus also taught that a man must abide in Him, if his prayers are to be effectual (John xv. 7). "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will and it shall be done unto you." Note this double abiding—the soul's abiding in Christ and Christ's word abiding in the soul. This first "abiding" is kindred to Christ's abiding in us. Here lies the mystery of faith, that I should abide in Christ and He abide, through His word, in me. It denotes absolute union and fullness of sympathy between the disciple and his Lord. With this union of the earthly soul and the heavenly the disciple cannot ask anything amiss—anything that is foreign to his Lord's will; neither can Heaven be deaf or indifferent to a prayer which comes from such a source, and which is begotten by such a spirit. Hence our Lord again uses the significant word "whatsoever"—"*Whatsoever* ye will it shall be done unto you."

Our Lord gave assurance that the prayer of His disciple shall be answered.

It is wonderful how He multiplied assurances that the disciple's prayer would not fail of a blessing with God.

How then do we reconcile these manifold assurances of Heaven with the indubitable fact that, relatively, few of the prayers of ordinary Christians find answer from God?

The chief reason, doubtless, is that the prayers of Christians are not what they ought to be. They are defective in the qualities which we have just enumerated

and which are necessary to give them power with God. A man who does not pray with a true expectancy of faith has no ground for thinking that the all-wise God will answer his prayer.

MEDITATION

Why are many of your prayers unanswered? Seek the causes within. Never distrust your Father's readiness to give whatever is good for you. Christ could not use more emphatic language than He did to assure us that all the resources of the Triune God were ready to respond to the true prayers of His child.

STUDY XVIII

The Disciple and Prayer—(continued).

But it must not be thought that all of God's declinings are a refusal to answer prayer. God often answers the prayers of His ignorant child by giving the opposite of what he asks, because He knows that the thing sought would be a curse to him. How often, in life, do we have occasion, also, to thank God for not granting unto us certain petitions which we eagerly offered in the past, but, which we later saw would have been a calamity to us, if they had been answered!

But Christ, in giving the assurance of response to prayer, grounded it chiefly upon God's Fatherly love, which made him so anxious to bestow upon us the best blessings that we seek. "Ask," He said, "and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you ***. If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things (or the Holy Spirit—which is His chiefest and richest blessing,) to them that ask Him?"

(Matt. vii. 7-11). In like manner, Jesus added to the parable of the Widow and the unjust Judge, the significant words,—“And shall not God avenge His elect, that cry to Him day and night, and yet He is long suffering over them? I say unto you that He will avenge them speedily.” Our heavenly Father may, indeed, delay, but He will never deny His blessings. He may test our faith, but He will not destroy our confidence in His Fatherly love and in His willingness to give His best things to His children. If earthly parents respond to their children’s deepest need, will not our Heavenly Father, out of the infinite treasures of His power and love, give that which is best, and that which is supremely needed, unto His own children who ask in a way which will permit Him to bless them?

Moreover, Jesus taught His disciples that He Himself would add His prayer to the petition of His disciples, and thus add to its effectiveness and power. “If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in Heaven. For [note the significance of this brief word, “for”] where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. xviii. 19, 20). The presence of Christ with His disciples, through His Holy Spirit, to-day, is largely for the purpose of inditing their petitions for them, even as the presence of the same Christ above, on the right hand of the Father, is for the purpose of adding His intercession to their prayers.

MEDITATION

We have not yet learned the infinite value to God’s people of having an interceding Christ on the right hand of the Father.

My prayer may be defective ; but with what added power does my " Advocate " present it to the Father in whose presence He is !

STUDY XIX

The Disciple and Prayer—(concluded).

On one occasion our Lord gave special emphasis to the importance of intercessory prayer.

The most elaborate, extended, and sublime of His prayers recorded in the whole Scriptures, is His great prayer of Intercession, recorded in John xvii. His heart has always gone forth in sympathy and passionate supplication to His Father for His own in the world. And He taught the importance, to His disciples, of intercession for their fellowmen. Through the parable of the midnight intercession of a friend for a friend (Luke xi. 5-13), He taught the need and importance of every disciple carrying unto the great Friend the interests and concern of those who are dear to him.

Note a few facts emphasized in this parable.

The need and distressful condition of the hungry stranger at midnight; the inability of the friend to satisfy his want; the double importunity of prayer here represented; the ability of the other friend to render the needed help. All these are suggestive in reference to the intercessory prayers of the saints.

And it is an interesting fact that our Lord's use of the well known words, " Ask and it shall be given unto you," etc., giving as they do the strongest assurance of God's answer to prayer, were spoken, according to Luke, in connection with His urging of the disciples to the habit of intercessory prayer; as if He were to say, that God is even more willing and anxious to answer

our prayers for others than He is to give us the blessings that we seek for ourselves.

MEDITATION

“Jesus, where’er thy people meet,
There they behold thy mercy seat;
Where’er they seek thee, thou art found,
And every place is hallowed ground.
Here may we prove the power of prayer
To strengthen faith and sweeten care,
To teach our faint desires to rise,
And bring all heaven before our eyes.”

* * * * *

“For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.”

STUDY XX

The Disciple and Wealth

What was our Lord’s attitude towards wealth?

He Himself was a Man of poverty. “He hath not where to lay His head” (Matt. viii. 20).

Did Jesus condemn the accumulation of riches? Some expressions seem to indicate this. “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break through and steal” (Matt. vi. 19). “Whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple” (Luke xiv. 33). “Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come follow me” (Luke xviii. 22).

Not a few such passages may be quoted. Inasmuch as most of them occur in the Gospel of Luke, some call this "the Gospel of poverty," and think that it was written under the influence of the Essenes who had renounced the world and its goods.

But the reason why our Lord so frequently refers adversely to the possession of riches is not because He felt that it was a sin to be wealthy, or that the riches of this world were an evil in themselves. For He recognized the good that was in wealth; and many of His parables and other utterances are based upon the value of possessions when rightly used. It was rather the abuse of wealth and the supreme danger involved in its possession as well as the great temptation which wealth always involved to the possessor which stirred Him. It is not so much riches that He condemns as the mad pursuit after wealth. It is the spirit of money-seeking, found no less in the poor than in the rich, which involves the supreme danger, and against which He warns the disciples. "Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on" (Luke xii. 22-31). It is this anxiety for more of this world-goods, this hastening to be rich, which is the pitfall of danger to so many. One of the disciples sold his Lord for a mere pittance, so consumed was he by the greed of money (Matt. xxvi. 14-23).

Consecrated wealth is useful beyond expression, and brings great blessings to men. Those pious women ministered according to their means unto the Lord (Luke viii. 3). The Lord fully appreciated the generous offering which Mary poured upon His head (John xii. 1-8). The centurion's liberality to the Jews in building their synagogue was esteemed by Jesus (Luke vii. 5).

MEDITATION

In all ages covetousness has been men's fondest idol. It is equally the sin of the poor and of the wealthy. Men run breathless after the vanishing things of the world with a false belief that they bring peace and rest. They too often seek it not that they may use it as God's stewards, but for the mere passion of possession and for the power it brings.

STUDY XXI

The Disciple and Wealth—(continued).

Jesus knew, as all men know, that wealth is power, and that he who does not vainly squander and who uses wisely the earthly talents which God has bestowed upon him will receive the final plaudit, "Well done," from his Master.

But Jesus taught His disciples that earthly wealth is evanescent and unsatisfying. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke xii. 15). Wealth has no permanent, or real, value as compared with life. "What shall a man be profited if he shall gain the whole world and forfeit his life, or what shall a man give in exchange for his life" (Matt. xvi. 26). The third great temptation of our Lord was that of the exaggerated value of worldly possession. But He knew that the possession of all the world was not to be compared to the smallest gift of life or possession of character. It was in this connection that He spoke the parable of the Rich Fool; and all are fools who build upon the permanence of wealth, and are not rich toward God (Luke xii. 16-21).

He also taught that riches are deceitful. He speaks of "the deceitfulness of riches" (Matt. xiii. 22; Matt. vi. 19-24). How many men there are who think that

they can serve God and mammon, which our Lord tells us is impossible.

Riches, Jesus says, are apt to be a hindrance to piety; and all that hinders man in soul-cultivation must inevitably be a curse to him. At the failure of the young man to follow His command the Lord turned unto His disciples and said—"How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God"; and in explanation of this, He continued, "How hard is it for them that *trust* in riches to enter into the Kingdom of God." The temptations and hindrances to piety which are involved in great wealth are both real and great (Mark x. 23; Luke xviii. 24). And this is largely owing to the fact expressed by our Lord,—“Where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also” (Matt. vi. 21). The earth's goods absorb one's thoughts, consume one's time and enmesh the soul with a great net-work of care and concern which are all but fatal to deep piety. One of the most pathetic instances recorded in the New Testament is that of the rich young ruler whose riches cost him his life (Luke xviii. 18-25).

MEDITATION

Let him who is poor thank God that he is not burdened with the harrowing cares and worry of wealth, nor is surrounded by its alluring temptations.

Let the rich beware the besetting sins of his fortune and pray for faithfulness to administer his great trust in a way pleasing to God and helpful to man.

STUDY XXII

The Disciple and Wealth—(concluded).

Our Lord taught, definitely, that money must be wisely used. Through the parable of the shrewd

steward (Luke xvi. 1-12), He instructs us in the right use of money. He tells us that men should so use their riches as to make for themselves friends in heaven. That is, the generous, Christian use of our money through wise charity, benevolent enterprise and philanthropic endeavour should be so directed as to lead many souls out of death unto life; so that many may rise in that last day and pour their benedictions upon our heads and meet us with a friendly assurance that the wise use of our wealth upon earth was the means of their salvation. Wealth so used may become a blessing unspeakable to men on earth, and to the owners in heaven.

Like all other gifts that are entrusted to us, earthly property is not our own. Upon earth we are merely stewards of God. The Lord enforced this truth by the parables of the Talents (Matt. xxv.) and of the Pounds (Luke xix. 12-27). The stewardship of man is the great lesson not only of these parables but of much of Christ's teaching in the Gospels. Of all that we are and what we possess He says unto us, His servants,—“Trade ye herewith till I come; ye are not your own, and of all that you possess you own nothing; ye are merely the stewards of God and are entrusted with His gifts for His glory.” And to every member of our race, and especially to the disciple, there will come some day the significant command,—“Render the account of thy stewardship” (Luke xvi. 2).

MEDITATION

How many swell with pride if they give a meagre tithe unto the Lord! They call it generous giving and liberality of soul! Under all lies the hidden assumption that our money is ours to give or withhold as we please. This is the tacit

lie of many Christian lives. We are not possessors, but stewards; we own nothing, we owe all.

“Take my silver and my gold;
Not a mite would I withhold.
Take my intellect and use
Every power as Thou shalt choose.”

STUDY XXIII

The Disciple and the World

By the term “world” the Lord referred to the outer order of nature, and more especially to those members of our human race who are lying in sin and are living in rebellion against God. “He was in the world, and the world was made through Him and the world knew Him not” (John i. 10). In His intercessory prayer He says, “O righteous Father, the world knew Thee not” (John xvii. 25). “Woe unto the world, because of occasions of stumbling” (Matt. xviii. 7).

Thus our Lord looked upon all unbelievers as constituting a world apart, outside of His Kingdom.

He, moreover, saith that the world cannot receive His Spirit of Truth (John xiv. 17); and He comforts His disciples with the assurance that He has overcome the world (John xvi. 33).

We are told that the disciple is in the world but is not of it. “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you” (John xv. 19). And in His great prayer the Lord again saith,—“They are not of the world even as I am not of the world” (John xvii. 16). Thus the disciple is externally, and in matters of ordinary life, a part of the world, in that he has to live

among men and be a part of human society. And yet He lives spiritually apart from the world. His home and His interests and His aspirations are of heaven, heavenly. They are entirely foreign and unintelligible to the world.

MEDITATION

Excessive attachment to this world is a great danger. Hold lightly earth's ties, if your home and citizenship is Above. We are pilgrims and strangers here below.

"I'm but a stranger here,
Heaven is my home,
Earth is a desert drear,
Heaven is my home.
Danger and sorrow stand
Round me on every hand:
Heaven is my fatherland,
Heaven is my home."

STUDY XXIV

The Disciple and the World—(continued).

Jesus commanded him to live uncontaminated by the world. The evil and sinful customs of worldly men he must not participate in. "I pray not that thou shouldst take them from the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one." "And for their sake I sanctify myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth" (John xvii. 15, 19).

The disciple must overcome the world. As Christ Himself overcame (John xvi. 33), so must the disciple; and the victory of Christ is the assurance to every faithful disciple that he also shall triumph over the world.

And yet the disciple must love the world. Not in the sense of loving its evil; but he must win the

world from its sin by the passion of his love for those who are still of the world. He must act the Good Samaritan in loving helpfulness and sweet sympathy to all.

It is the privilege of the disciple to renew and transform the world. It is he who is called "the salt of the earth" (Matt. v. 13). It is his privilege to preserve society from sin and decay. And he is, moreover, the yeast (Matt. xiii. 33) with whose transforming, assimilating power we are all familiar. And however few Christians there may be in a community, in this land where heathenism is so universal, and where non-Christians constitute the mass of the people, they must live up to their privilege as the renovators of the community in which they live.

And they are, moreover, called to be "The light of the world." Like the moon they receive the light from the Sun of righteousness and are called upon simply to reflect that light in this world of darkness (Matt. v. 14-16).

MEDITATION

*How wonderful the thought that Christ Himself, **for the sake of His disciples**, should have kept Himself uncontaminated by the world. It revealed the same interest that He evinced in Peter, when He said, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat; but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Luke xxii. 31, 32). How little do we know of the deep interest of our Lord in our life and of His unceasing prayer for our preservation from the evils and sins of the world!*

STUDY XXV

The Disciple and Temptation

In this world of sin there are three sources of temptation to man—his own sinful heart, Satan, and evil

men. The lust of the heart is ever with us; death itself can only separate the disciple from those evil passions which betray him into sin and lead him captive every day of his life. The great tempter, also, is ever seeking to pollute his life and to lead him astray from God and duty. Evil men throw over him the spell of their influence which he must daily seek to avoid or overcome.

Temptation is that door of the soul through which sin enters the heart and so frequently brings defeat and, sometimes, disaster to the disciple.

But, whatever be the source of our sin, the temptations of life make the disciple an easy prey to them. They must be resisted at all points. In India men worship devils. The Christian is commanded to resist the devil and his host and to overcome them.

Our Lord was tempted like as we are. The ever-vigilant tempter never left Him for long. But Jesus was ever watchful and withstood him. Though His temptations were greater and, perhaps, more numerous than any that beset any other man, He never yielded to them.

At the beginning of His public ministry, we are told that He was thrice tempted (Matt. iv. 1-11). He was taken by the Holy Spirit, immediately after His baptism, for another equally important "Baptism of Struggle" with Satan, that He might go into His work conscious of the strength which comes from victory over evil. These three recorded temptations were doubtless typical of the conflicts which He had to wage throughout the days of His ministry. And they resemble the conflict mentioned by John (1 John ii. 16),—"The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vain glory of life."

It may be said that the first temptation was expressive of distrust in the Father; the second, of overtrust which is presumption; the third, of love of wealth and power. More appropriately still we may say that the first temptation is that to exercise His miraculous power for His own good, which our Lord never did; the second, the temptation to seek popularity, contrary to His deepest convictions as to the right method of service. The people expected the Messiah to appear suddenly as from heaven. Shall He meet their expectations and leap from the temple tower and gain their applause and their acceptance as the Messiah; or shall He, at the expense of their acceptance, present Himself in the way of divine wisdom but of human unpopularity? The third was a temptation to dependence upon earthly power for the maintenance of His work.

MEDITATION

St. James was right (i. 13-15) when he emphasized the fact that man's own heart is the source of sin; man "is drawn away by his own lust and enticed." He who guards well his own heart fortifies himself also against the wiles of men and of Satan.

The indwelling Spirit of Christ is the sure antidote to all temptation.

STUDY XXVI

The Disciple and Temptation—(continued).

In all these temptations He firmly withstood the evil one and foiled him in every point of conflict; so He entered upon His mission fortified by this victory over temptation.

And He, being tempted in all things as we are, is able, and has always been able, to succour His disciples who are tempted. And He has left to every disciple,

His own clean record of unyielding purity and of an overcoming life that the disciple may follow in His footsteps.

Thus He commands every disciple to avoid temptation. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak." In these temptations of life and service there are, for the disciple, two armours of defence,—watchfulness and prayer. "Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is (Mark xiii. 33-37). The very unexpectedness of temptation is a call to watchfulness. A spiritual alertness, being always on the guard, a determination not to be caught inactive in our vigilance against sin—this is the first assurance of victory. But the tempter is stronger than we, and he can cleverly defeat us by his guile. There is only One who can defend us against him and give us the victory, and that is God. Prayer therefore unto Him is our second recourse and our surest way to be victorious over temptation.

It is also a comfort to know that our Lord is not only able to succour us, but is also ever praying for us, that we may not yield to the tempter (Luke xxii. 32). It is not only true that He, our Lord, holds every disciple in the hollow of His hand,—“And no one shall snatch them out of My hand,”—He also daily presents them in prayer unto the Father who, “is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand” (John x. 29). The tempter cannot worry the soul which abides in God and which is there beyond the reach of temptation.

There are temptations which the disciple must avoid. And there are others which are essential as a part of

his life. It is by facing and overcoming such that he acquires the full strength of manhood.

There is a sense, and a very important one, in which God tempts the soul. He brings a man into conflict with those antagonizing forces which may ruin him, but which also furnish him the struggle which gives manly strength and undaunted vigour. And the Scriptures tell us that "there hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear. But God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it" (1 Cor. x. 13).

MEDITATION

The ancient Greeks thought that the spirit of every man defeated in war entered into the victor and added to his prowess. Every temptation overcome is so much added to the equipment and strength of the disciple. A man has no right to seek temptation; but when it comes, he must face it unflinchingly and seek God's help to triumph over it.

"My soul, be on thy guard;
Ten thousand foes arise,
A host of sins are pressing hard
To draw thee from the skies.
O watch, and fight, and pray;
The battle ne'er give o'er;
Renew it boldly every day,
And help Divine implore."

STUDY XXVII

The Disciple and Faith

Faith is a fundamental attitude of the disciple's mind and heart toward God. All manifestations of

Gospel faith resolve themselves into such confidence in God and His word as to lead one to lean implicitly upon Him and trust Him for everything, especially for the salvation of the soul.

Jesus was always delighted to find this faith in the disciples and in others. Notice His delight in the simple and unexpected faith of the Centurion. "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel." And thereupon He saw a vision of many coming "from the east and the west, and sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven!" (Matt. viii. 10-12).

The possession of faith among the people was usually made by Him the condition of His performing miracles among the people. When He saw their faith it was a joy to do His mighty works among them. But we are told that in His own village of Nazareth He did not many mighty works because of their unbelief (Matt. ix. 2; xiii. 58).

Jesus attributed much power to this faith, and commanded His disciples to seek and to possess it (Mark xi. 22; Luke xvii. 19; xviii. 42). And He told His disciples that their inefficiency in service and their want of power was owing to their want of faith (Matt. xvii. 19, 20).

MEDITATION

Faith in its simplest analysis is the open channel for the entrance of God's presence and blessing into the soul.

It is the linking of our life with the divine that it may pour into it, its power and sweetness. It is a perfect condition of heart for God to use for His glory. How far do our hearts present this condition?

STUDY XXVIII

The Disciple and Faith—(continued).

The faith of the disciple finds expression in:—

(1) The attitude of his will. In reference to the withered fig tree and the need of true faith Jesus said unto them, "Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, be thou taken up and cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he saith cometh to pass, he shall have it * * *. Therefore believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them" (Mark xi. 23, 24). The disciple must bring himself into that frame of mind which involves true faith. In disgust the Lord looked upon His enemies and said unto them, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will in no wise believe" (John iv. 48). The obtuseness of their unbelief was a moral obtuseness. Faith brings the will of the disciple into harmony with the divine will. It gives him quiet submission to all the dispensations of God's providence and leads him to know, with St. Paul, that all things work together for good to them that love God. He even learns to acquiesce in His deepest disappointments, knowing that "disappointments are His appointments."

Even in the storms of life, by faith he knows that the Lord who quiets the wind and calms every wave is with him and says to anxious souls, "Why are ye fearful? have ye not yet faith?" (Mark iv. 40).

(2) His Prayer.

Faith, as we have seen, is essential to prayer. It gives wings to our petitions. It takes hold upon the divine arm and brings power and blessing unto the life.

(3) His perfect Redemption.

Our Lord said unto His own, "Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me; * * * * for I go to prepare a place for you" (John xiv. 1, 2). Faith not only seizes upon the blessings which Christ already presents to the soul; it also looks to the ultimate home and bliss beyond prepared for it by his Lord.

(4) His Confidence in the Coming of the Kingdom and its ultimate Realization.

True faith interprets for the disciples the significance of the parables of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven (Matt. xiii. 31-33). It seizes upon the divine assurance of His Last Commission (Matt. xxviii. 18-20). And it listens to the eternal echo of His wonderful prayer in the upper room, that "all may be one"; and it leads him to go on his way rejoicing with new strength and assurance that the day will come when that blessed song shall be sung, "The Kingdom of the world is become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. xi. 15).

It is the duty of every disciple to offer daily the apostolic prayer—"Increase our faith."

MEDITATION

"Oh for a faith that will not shrink,
Though pressed by many a foe,
That will not tremble on the brink
Of poverty or woe;
That will not murmur nor complain
Beneath the chastening rod,
But in the hour of grief or pain
Can lean upon its God.
Lord, give me such a faith as this,
And then, whate'er may come,
I taste e'en now the hallowed bliss
Of an eternal home."

STUDY XXIX

The Disciple and Humility

Pride is the most pervasive and persistent of all sins. It is the source of most of man's spiritual infirmities and obliquities. Our Lord held in abhorrence the pride of the Scribes and Pharisees. Like the Brahman of to-day the Pharisee of old was the incarnation of haughtiness and conceit. The "woes" pronounced by our Lord, and many of His warnings, had reference to the proud Pharisee.

Of all the weaknesses of the Twelve none followed them longer or disfigured and injured them more than their pride. Even in the most sacred moment of His institution of the Lord's Supper it animated them and put its foul mark upon them (John xiii).

In like manner humility (the opposite of pride) is the most helpful, healthful and heavenly of Christian graces. It puts the disciple in the only frame of mind which qualifies him to receive all of Heaven's blessings.

Humility is not abjectness of soul; nor is it an inability to appreciate one's gifts and powers. It is rather a true and just realization of one's littleness and consequent appreciation of one's value of himself before God and men, and a knowledge of where he ought to locate himself and how he should behave himself. It is, in the language of the Apostle, the ability, "not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but so to think as to think soberly" (Romans xii. 3).

MEDITATION

Pride is the Devil's Paradise. It brings momentary pleasure, but its fruits are as the apples of Sodom. It has no

room for God. It is the mother of a whole brood of vipers—suspicion, jealousy, envy, hatred, etc.

The humble heart is the abode of God—where He chooses to be.

“Thy home is with the humble, Lord ;
The simplest are the best ;
Thy lodging is in childlike hearts ;
Thou makest there thy rest.”

STUDY XXX

The Disciple and Humility—(continued).

1. Jesus taught that true greatness lies in humility. “Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child the same is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven” (Matt. xviii. 1-4 ; see also Mark ix. 33-37). In like manner He said, “He that is least among you all, the same is great” (Luke ix. 48). No soul can be truly great which does not know the childlike sweetness of humility.

2. This humility of heart is best revealed in humbleness of service.

“He that is greatest among you shall be your servant” (Matt. xxiii. 11, 12). It is easy enough for one to profess humility. It is far more difficult to prove it by hearty service rendered to the lowly. “Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto Me” (Matt. xxv. 40). Witness once more that beautiful picture of humble service revealed by our Lord in washing the disciples’ feet (John xiii.) “If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another’s feet.” The humblest service is that to which the Lord invites every disciple as a test of his loyalty. It is down in

the lowest depth of poverty and suffering and ignorance that humility loves to abide in service. It is there that it shines with a divine lustre; and it is in that lowly service that it reveals its kinship to heaven itself.

MEDITATION

“Nothing can be our redemption, but the restoration of the lost humility, the original and only true relation of the creature to its God. And so Jesus came to bring humility back to earth, to make us partakers of it, and by it save us. His humility is our salvation. His salvation is our humility.” Is this grace your possession?

STUDY XXXI

The Disciple and Humility—(concluded).

3. The first Beatitude of the Kingdom of God is Humility,—“Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven” (Matt. v. 3). The expression, “poor in spirit” beautifully reveals true humility. It is the spirit which has emptied itself of all pride, which knows its own utter helplessness, and which has taken its place low at the feet of God confessing its nothingness. Before such a soul lies a heavenly possession, even all the blessings of the Kingdom of Heaven. There is nothing in God’s Kingdom which will not flow down into the lowly, humble heart.

4. Our Lord invites every one to come and cast upon Himself all of pride’s burdens and the intolerable load which haughty conceit has thrown upon him, and to learn of Him the peace which cometh from true humility. “Learn of me,” He saith, “for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matt. xi. 29). The lesson of soul-rest is taught

here. Jesus Himself is the Teacher; and His own example of meekness and humility is the supreme lesson to be learnt by every disciple. Nine-tenths of the burdens and sorrows of life are put upon us by our own mean pride. And nothing but following our Lord down into and through the valley of His deepest Humility will bring us relief. Hence, the beautiful words of the Apostle,—“Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus who * * * emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross” (Philippians ii. 5-8).

MEDITATION

*“The blessings of the higher Christian life are often like the objects exposed in a shop window—one can see them clearly, and yet cannot reach them, because of the intervening glass. Even so Christians may see clearly the blessed promises of perfect peace and rest, of ever-flowing joy and love, and yet feel that there is something between, hindering the true possession. And what may that be? **Nothing but pride.**” Is this your condition?*

STUDY XXXII

The Disciple and Non-Resistance

Humility is kindred to a class of virtues usually called “passive,” as distinct from the “active virtues,” such as boldness, fearless opposition to evil, aggressive maintenance of one’s belief and faith.

The Passive Virtues are such as meekness, patience, long-suffering, endurance of evil.

The former are often called “Occidental virtues,” because they usually characterize the Western type of

life. The others are called "Oriental," because they are more valued, and are chiefly emphasized, in the life of the East, especially in India.

It is truly said that the people of the West will fight for their faith; they bristle with all forms of aggressive piety. The inhabitants of India are more ready to suffer, than they are to fight, for their religious belief. These passive virtues represent that type of Christian life which we denominate "Non-Resistance."

In the Sermon on the Mount, and in other places, our Lord inculcates the duty of non-resistance (Matt. v. 38-42). In the Old Dispensation, the Israelites were taught the Law of Retaliation—"An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." But Jesus commanded His disciples not to resist him that is evil. "Whosoever smiteth thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also," etc. On one occasion James and John were angry with the Samaritans for their inhospitality and sought permission to invoke vengeance upon them. But our Lord rebuked them, declaring that they knew not of what spirit they were (Luke ix. 54, 55). In sending forth His disciples He instructed them that when they were persecuted in one city they should flee unto the next (Matt. x. 23).

MEDITATION

The day has passed when the West can laugh at the "mild Hindu." Mildness under abuse is not a weakness but a strong virtue.

To overcome evil with good—this is the duty call of the day.

Who is to judge which is stronger and better—the sweet and silent patience of the gentle woman or the vehement attack, by man, on the fortress of evil?

STUDY XXXIII

The Disciple and Non-Resistance—(continued).

Did our Lord literally mean, in the Sermon on the Mount, that we should turn the other cheek to one who smote us, and that we should bestow our cloak upon one who should rob us of our under-garment? Hardly. And yet we must believe that He intended, by these and similar passages, to emphasize to the disciples the absolute need and supreme importance of the practice of the principles of non-resistance. Jesus usually emphasized the principles of life rather than the detailed performance of duty. Many have gone astray by giving too literal an interpretation to His words, and by following too closely His individual acts; as in the case of the diminutive sect which follows Him literally in the act of washing the disciples' feet.

The principle here enunciated by the Lord is one of fundamental importance. Those passive virtues of non-resistance and patient endurance of evil have a very important place in the Christian life. The West has been wrong in thinking and speaking in a depreciating way of the passive side of Christian character. Christ neither thought nor spoke slightingly of this half of the Christian life. He emphasized and magnified it on many occasions.

It is not less, but more, manly to endure than to resent an evil. It is easier for the natural man to strike back than to turn the other cheek to his enemy. The spirit of resentment comes easily, while the spirit of patient endurance is often hard to command. True manliness and highest Christian character is more manifest in the spirit of self-control and non-resentment

than in the endeavour to antagonize and overthrow all that conflicts with our ideas of the Kingdom of God.

India has this lesson to teach to the West—the lesson which our Lord Himself emphasized, but which the West has largely ignored, the lesson of quiet submission, patient endurance, meek acceptance of our lot and an unwillingness to strike back at our enemy. Does not this life require more grace to live and more nobility of character to exemplify than any other?

MEDITATION

“Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
Forgive our feverish ways;
Reclothe us in our rightful mind,
In purer lives Thy service find,
In deeper reverence, praise.
Drop Thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of Thy peace.”

STUDY XXXIV

The Disciple and Non-Resistance—(concluded).

Whether it is right for men to carry this principle, as not a few Christians do, to the point of declining to engage in war under any circumstance, it is not easy to say. There are times, when, if the people decline to take up arms in a just cause and against a rapacious and intolerant enemy, they may be wiped out of existence.

And yet, it certainly inculcates upon all Christians the duty of withstanding war and its hellish accompaniments, and of promoting peace and good-will among

men. For are they not disciples of the "Prince of Peace"? And was it not one of His last blessings upon earth to breathe upon His disciples His own peace, which the world cannot give?

And did not Christ Himself generally exemplify His principle in His own Life? When men attacked Him, He simply fled from their presence and escaped (Luke iv. 29, 30; John viii. 59; x. 39). He had power to overthrow and destroy His enemies. But He never exercised it; He never sought to escape the bitterness of His foes by the exercise of His miraculous powers. And, when finally arrested, He might, as He said, have commanded the aid of a legion of angels to rescue Him; but He exercised not that power, and He rebuked the disciples for trying to defend Him at that time (Matt. xxvi. 52). "As a lamb before its shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth," and He reached not His hand in self-defence when His enemies were most bitter and triumphant.

"Consider Him that hath endured such gainsaying of sinners against Himself, that ye wax not weary, fainting in your souls" (Heb. xii. 3). The example of Christ, no less than His instruction, must ever teach the disciple the blessedness of non-resistance to evil.

MEDITATION

Some of us need to readjust our code of moral values, and to pattern more after our Lord who gave the highest example of self-restraint and patient endurance of evil. He was like a lamb which before its shearers is dumb. To endure obloquy and death, when by a word, or by the momentary exercise of His power, He might have destroyed His enemies—that was His divine lesson of non-resistance.

STUDY XXXV

The Disciple and God's Word

Our Lord revered the Bible which was in His possession. He studied the Old Testament from childhood and made it the man of His counsel. He was thoroughly familiar with it and was prompt to use it on all occasions (Mark xii. 28-34).

He also fed upon its truth, and found in it both nourishment and inspiration to His soul.

He also used it as the "Sword of the Spirit" in His attack upon the great tempter (Matt. iv. and Luke iv, Matt. xv. 8; xii. 7).

God's Word was His ever ready resource, because He was impregnated with its truth.

The New Testament is the fulfilment of the Old. The dim light of the Jewish Scriptures has grown into the brilliancy of noonday in the New. Our Lord said:—"Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets; I came not to destroy but to fulfil" (Matt. v. 17). The teaching of Jesus in the New Testament is the highest fulfilment of the promise of the Old Testament.

Jesus attached great importance to His own word. He was conscious of the divine wisdom and the ultimate truth which His message bore to men. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. xxiv. 35; Mark xiii. 31).

Then He was not only assured of its power; He was also convinced that it was absolutely necessary for man. For a man to reject His word and to be ashamed of the same, was to reject and be ashamed of Him. And for such a man there was no hope. "Whosoever

shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man also shall be ashamed of him when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels" (Mark viii. 38).

The words of Jesus are to the disciples to-day even more than the Old Testament Scriptures were to Jesus Himself. They breathe of His sublime, heavenly, thoughts and reflect the glory of His image. How much richer in life and greater in inspiration and spiritual helpfulness is the Bible of the Christian to-day than that of the Hebrew twenty centuries ago!

MEDITATION

Every important religion has its Scriptures. Among the broken lights of the others shines the full orb'd divine lustre of the Bible. Consider how meagre and inadequate the Scriptures possessed by the Psalmist of old. And yet how deep his love, how lavish and eloquent his praise of the same. How much richer and more satisfying our Bible than his! And yet do we love it more and prize it more highly?

STUDY XXXVI

The Disciple and God's Word—(continued).

God's Word is the treasure-house of the faith and the life of the disciple. Even of the Old Testament Jesus could say to the Jew,—“Ye search the Scriptures because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of Me” (John v. 39). With how much more of significance and truth can these words be used of the Christian's Bible to-day? For in it are treasured up the riches of God's grace unto us through clear precept and bright promise;

and here may the Christian daily refresh his soul and fortify his faith against all the evils and enemies of life.

God's Word is to the disciple, as it was to His Lord, "The Sword of the Spirit." In the mighty conflicts of life he must learn to wield it well. Its passages of truth must be well learned and treasured up in the memory, ever ready for emergency as a foil to every evil suggestion and insidious attack of the ever wily tempter.

God's Word is the instrument of the Spirit for illumining the disciple concerning Christ Himself and the work which Christ has wrought for him. "He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you He shall take of Mine and shall declare it unto you" (John xiv. 26 ; xvi. 14). To the disciple who studies God's Word prayerfully the Spirit is ever present, magnifying every message of life and illumining every word of promise and of blessing.

Moreover, the Word of God is the seed of life. This is the beautiful and pregnant word of comparison which our Lord uses in so many of His parables (see Matt. xiii). "The seed is the Word of God." Seed represents vitalizing power and fruitfulness. In the heart of the disciple it finds fertile soil for growth; and in his life it bears fruit that will refresh and satisfy many hungry ones.

The strength of the disciple of our Lord must largely depend upon his faithful use of God's Word. For His own spiritual growth and power in life, and for his success in service, he must be daily in close fellowship with God through this divine Book. For out of

the Bible must daily come to him the greatest issues and blessings of life.

MEDITATION

In South India, Protestants are called "Bible People." We should be proud of the characterization and make ourselves worthy of it. We should see to it daily that out of this Word of God there come to us a new message of life, a new inspiration for service and a new help for communion with God.

"Break Thou the Bread of Life,
Dear Lord, to me,
As Thou didst break the loaves
Beside the sea.
Beyond the sacred page
I seek Thee, Lord;
My Spirit pants for Thee,
O living Word."

STUDY XXXVII

The Disciple must Love all Men

The disciple, having been brought by Christ into a new relationship to God, is also brought into a new relationship to men. Henceforth, joined to the command, to love God, is that to love his neighbour as himself. There is no other commandment greater than this (Mark xii. 31). To love all men is as important, to the disciple, as to love God. The second command flows directly from the first. And the parable of the Good Samaritan is Christ's answer to the further question as to who shall be the object of our love. Suffering, needy man, anywhere and everywhere, must be the object of the disciple's love. His love must be a universal love. Like the love of God it must reach forth to friend and foe alike (Matt. v. 44; Luke vi. 34).

The love of Christ's disciples must be purified of all narrowness and petty jealousies, and caste and sectional partialities, and must be a universal benevolence that breathes its blessings upon all. How wonderful this teaching of our Lord in view of the divisiveness of caste and the mean jealousies inculcated everywhere in this land by Hinduism.

Jesus not only ignored, He deliberately trampled upon, all caste prejudices and class distinctions. He taught the proud Pharisee and the august member of the Sanhedrin that, in order to be saved, he also must be born again (John iii. 3). He horrified Scribe and Apostle alike by choosing Matthew, the outcaste, to be one of the Twelve. He consorted with Publicans and Sinners who were ostracized by society (Luke xv. 1, 2). He exalted the Samaritan (to associate with whom was enough to put a Jew under a social bann) as the type of goodness (Luke x. 33-37). Even on the cross He saved the penitent thief. Thus He threw to the winds the social proprieties of His day and chose men only for their soul's worth and despised and spurned the *elite*, when He found them mean.

The disciple must also cultivate love in its intensity as well as in its universality. There must be no such thing as revenge. Forgiveness is the badge of its sincerity. A quiet and passionate love for man in his deepest need and lowest estate is the command of our Lord to every disciple. As we have seen, Jesus made this altruistic, self-effacing, love the test of worth in His description of the final judgment (Matt. xxv. 34-40). This love is the broadening out of human interest and sympathy from family to caste, from caste to nation, and from nation to race. It is the love of humanity,

under all human conditions, that is enjoined upon the Christian. This is the characteristic teaching of Christianity to-day. No other faith shines so brightly in the lustre of its love. Our Lord partly embodied it in the Golden Rule—"Do unto others as ye would that others should do unto you."

MEDITATION

Christianity is in India to-day, because it is only by coming here that it is able to preserve its own life. It could not survive the loss of a love and sympathy which are as wide as our human race and as deep as its greatest needs. That Christian is either undeveloped or is dying whose charity begins at home and ends there. A love that does not circle the globe in its prayer and effort is not a fit possession for a disciple of Jesus.

STUDY XXXVIII

The Disciple must Love all Men—(concluded).

It is man as our brother that we are specially taught to love. If God be the universal Father, as Jesus taught, then are all men brethren; and between, brother and brother, love is the only universal language (Matt. xxiii. 8; Matt. v. 22; vii. 3-5). This love is opposed to all anger. "I say unto you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment" (Matt. v. 22). It is a love that will stand the strain and tension of social and business life between man and man. It lifts man above every jealousy and mean rivalry and breathes within him the spirit of peace and of complacency.

This realization of the brotherhood of man lies deep at the foundation of all missionary work. Christianity could not be a missionary religion, any more than Hinduism, did it not believe vitally in the kinship of

man everywhere. It was in view of this new vision of human brotherhood, in all its universality as imparted by Christ to His disciples, that Jesus found a response to His Last Commission—"Go and make disciples of all the nations", and "ye shall be My witnesses * * * unto the uttermost parts of the earth" (Matt. xxviii. 19; Acts i. 8). It was this same universal spirit of Christian love which led the great Apostle to the Gentiles to exclaim:—"I am debtor both to the Greeks and the Barbarians, to the wise and to the foolish." Paul knew in his heart of hearts that there lay upon him the mighty debt of love which he owed to all men of whatever clime or colour.

This is the chief, impelling, motive of every Christian disciple as he crosses land and sea to seek sinful man in order to bring unto him the light of God in Christ Jesus. It matters not who he may be; to give a cup of cold water to even the lowest in the name of Christ is a blessed duty and a glorious opportunity (Matt. x. 42).

MEDITATION

The brotherhood of man is the discovery and badge of Christ. Formerly a stranger was an "enemy." To-day we know that we are all kith and kin under the broad roof of the universal Father. In Christ we have learned that,

"There is neither East nor West,
Border, nor breed, nor birth;
Where two strong men stand face to face,
Though they come from the ends of the earth."

STUDY XXXIX

The Disciple and Brotherly Love

The disciple of Jesus has not only felt the cord of love which binds him to every member of our race;

he has also learned that there exists between one disciple and another a relationship more close than that of blood or of universal brotherhood—it is the relationship of grace and of spiritual affinity. They are saved by grace and are united in Christ by the Spirit; they are pursuing the same spiritual aims and are inspired by the same object of bringing all men into the Kingdom of God. The disciples should be specialists in mutual love. It was indeed the ancient commandment of the Old Dispensation. But our Lord breathed into it His own loving spirit and thereby called it a “new commandment,”—“A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another” (John xiii. 34).

The measure of this brotherly love is Christ's own love to us. “This is my commandment that ye love one another, *even as* I have loved you.” A brother should never be satisfied with less of passion for his brother than that which Christ entertains for himself. “Ye are my friends No longer do I call you servants; but I have called you friends; for all things that I heard from my Father I have made known unto you.” The intimacy of a loving friendship with Christ and of the same communion with every disciple of Christ—this is the privilege to which Christ calls every disciple. They are the common brothers of our Lord and of one another. Looking upon His disciples, our Lord said, “Behold My mother and My brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother and sister and mother” (Mark iii. 34, 35). Members in the family of our dear Lord, they are members one of the other to love, cherish and help one another.

They are not only common members of the Kingdom, but also of the Church of God, organized in the world for the furtherance of the Kingdom. And so there rests upon them the responsibility to discipline and chasten one another in love. "If thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone." In another place He saith, "If therefore thou art offering thy gift at the altar and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother and then come and offer thy gift" (Matt. xviii. 15; v. 23, 24). Thus the first duty of a disciple is that of a free, loving intercourse with his brother. Where that exists, the Christian life will flow on freely. Where that exists not, the channels of divine grace in his life are closed.

Brotherly love is ultimately to reveal itself in the oneness of all Christians throughout the world. This is the burden of our Lord's great Intercessory Prayer, "That they may all be one; even as Thou Father art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me" (John xvii. 21). This perfection of brotherly love is being increasingly exemplified in the Christian Church to-day, and is becoming the mightiest testimony to the world of the divine origin of our faith, even as it was at the beginning of the Christian era. Under the spell of Christ's own influence and of Pentecostal blessing the Christians of the first century loved one another with a great passion and distributed their goods in common. Of the early Christians the Pagans once said,—“They love each other without knowing each other.” And to-day brotherly love is more pervasive

and effective than it has been since Apostolic days. See how denominational differences are vanishing while amity and comity are spreading their white wings over Christian disciples in all lands!

MEDITATION

Thank God that the age of toleration and suspicion is being supplanted by the glorious era of mutual love and appreciation in the Kingdom of God! Shall we not pray for a still fuller blessing of love?

“Gracious Spirit, Holy Ghost,
Taught by Thee, we covet most,
Of Thy gifts at Pentecost,
Holy, Heavenly love.
From the overshadowing
Of Thy gold and silver wing,
Shed on us, who to Thee sing,
Holy, Heavenly love.”

STUDY XL

The Disciple and Forgiveness

The most genuine test of love is its readiness to forgive a fault. Our Lord presented on the Cross a unique illustration of this virtue. He invoked His Father's forgiveness upon those who were crucifying Him.

The Spirit of resentment is everywhere denounced by Christ. The abuse of a brother shall be met with condign punishment (Matt. v. 22). The unforgiving spirit is of the devil and shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.

Our Lord taught that forgiveness of injuries done to us should precede our prayer for forgiveness from God. This is manifest in the model prayer which He gave

to us, which He supplemented by the remarks,—“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you” (Matt. vi. 14). On another occasion also He said,—“And whensoever ye stand praying, forgive if ye have aught against anyone; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses” (Mark xi. 25).

God will not, cannot, forgive the unforgiving man. This is a clear, but too often forgotten, message which He gives concerning prayer. It even carries within itself the terrible implication that the unforgiving soul desires that God should be as unrelenting as he is. Indeed, God cannot be otherwise in this matter of forgiveness.

It is further taught that no offering is acceptable to God when presented by an unforgiving spirit. Read carefully the notable passage (Matt. v. 23-26), and see how imperative is the duty of any man who would find the least access to God, first to reconcile Himself with his fellowman and establish peace with him. God has access to our hearts in forgiving blessing only when the way is open in loving intercourse between us and our brothers.

MEDITATION

*How many hearts are to-day closed against blessings human and divine by their unrelenting, unforgiving, temper! Even when we **do** forgive, it is in such a mean, half-hearted, way that we lose nine-tenths of the blessing which forgiveness should bring.*

Oh, the blasphemy of a host of Christian prayers which daily ascend for God's forgiving love from hearts that harbour resentment and are implacable! Oh, the pitiable sight of a man who allows such petty, mean and imaginary slights of others to block his way of access to God's throne of grace!

STUDY XLI

The Disciple and Forgiveness—(continued).

Moreover, God's forgiveness of us is presented by Christ as a definite reason for our forgiving one another. In the parable of the Prodigal Son how readily the father, who was the injured party, forgives and receives the prodigal. But the oldest brother showed a relentless heart and would not go in to the feast of love. The parable of the unforgiving servant (Matt. xviii. 23-35) not only emphasizes this truth; it also shows the infinite love of God and the meanness of man by a contrast between the amount of debt owed by us to Him and owing by men to each other. How freely He bestows upon us His forgiving grace, though our sins are numberless. How meanly we withhold our forgiveness, or forgive meanly small offences which are committed against us!

How often shall we forgive one another? Shall there be a limit to our forgiving spirit? Our Lord replied that it should be "not seven times, but seventy times seven." In other words, we must be ever ready to meet a penitent soul with a forgiving spirit and a peaceable heart (Matt. xviii. 21, 22). Love must flow freely from heart to heart. Forgiveness must become a habit of one's spirit.

There is only one limit, and that is the willingness of the offender to seek forgiveness. God Himself cannot forgive the unrepentant sinner. The peace and blessing of forgiveness cannot enter the impenitent soul. "If he repent, forgive him" (Luke xvii. 3). Forgiveness, like peace, requires mutual action between the offender and the offended. We must love our enemies always

and everywhere (Matt. v. 43-48). But forgiveness cannot be bestowed until he is ready to receive it. It would do him no good. But the injured brother must be the first to move, and must hold his heart of love ready to forgive and must always seek for signs of repentance. He must even try to lead, by kindness, his enemy to repentance and thus "pour coals of fire upon his head and overcome evil with good."

This forgiving love must forget as well as forgive; or rather, it must forget in order to forgive. The forgiving spirit has no memory of past evils. The joy of forgiveness is as sweet in him who bestows it as it is in him who receives it. Think of the joy of the Lord, as the woman who was a sinner poured out her gratitude and affection to Him in mingled tears and offerings.

MEDITATION

Think not your duty done by simply expressing your willingness to be appeased. Had God merely done the same in your case, where would you be now?

Nowhere does greatness of soul find surer test and revelation than in the way a man ignores offences done against himself and maintains a pacific mind towards all. Thrice blessed all peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God.

STUDY XLII

The Disciple under Persecution

He who would be a faithful disciple of our Lord must endure persecution. Our Lord foretold the coming of tribulation, and of the day when men would delight in persecuting God's elect. The disciple is not above his Master, nor a servant above his Lord. It is enough for the disciple that he is as his Master and

a servant as his Lord. "If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household?" (Matt. x. 24-25.) Many a disciple rarely tastes the bitter-sweet of persecution. It is probably true that this is owing more to want of faithfulness in his life than to a change of the world's spirit. Many compromise with the spirit of this world. They avoid persecution; but they also lose power and joy in their Christian life. "Ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake; but he that endureth to the end the same shall be saved" (Matt. x. 22). "If the world hateth you, ye know that it hath hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John xv. 18-19). A man may avoid the hatred of the world and lose his own soul; or he may bravely face the world's opposition and, with Christ, find the peace and joy of Christian triumph. Persecution is one of God's common ways of testing the character of His own (Matt. xiii. 21). Man cannot be sure, even of his own life, unless he passes through the furnace of affliction. It is this furnace that purifies the gold of faith and character of the true disciple. It develops patience which is one of the best of the Christian virtues. "Ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake. And not a hair of your head shall perish. In your patience ye shall win your souls" (Luke xxi. 17-19). Patience under persecution wonderfully adds to the richness of a Christian life. Blessed is he that endureth persecution. Unto him shall be given the riches of the heavenly Kingdom (Matt. v. 10-12). To such as meet

affliction in the spirit of the Master there is the assurance of relief and blessing.

Such persecutions, for the sake of Jesus and His Gospel, are a supreme honour granted only to noble ones.

MEDITATION

Should it not be our prayer in India that God give to His people a robustness of piety and an other-worldliness which will invite persecution and which, under persecution, will enable them to reveal a faith and a beauty of patience which will draw the multitudes to Christ? The blood of the martyrs must, in India also, be the seed of the Church. Christians are too rarely living lives that are worthy of being persecuted. They are too often in friendly alliance with the prince of this world.

STUDY XLIII

The Disciple and Persecution—(continued).

The disciple is commanded to pray for those that persecute him (Matt. v. 44). He must beware of the vindictive spirit. He must win his way by the sweetness of his bearing under bitter opposition.

He can afford to be patient; for the Lord tells him that out of all his tribulations He will bring unto him peace, triumph and good cheer (John xvi. 33).

While the disciple must be ever ready and brave to endure persecution, he must be slow to persecute others. How quick was John to persecute the unknown disciple who was casting out devils in the name of the Lord! (Mark ix. 38). This is the first recorded persecution made by a Christian of a Christian; but, alas, it is not the last. Persecutions by Christians of their brethren

have been the most bitter and the most frequent in the world. The narrowness and the bitterness of hatred, and the relentlessness of persecution have, unfortunately, found too much exemplification among Christians. But, thank God, it is yielding increasingly to the spirit of love and mutual sympathy. In India, at present, the danger is, on the one hand, that Christians should shun the inconvenience of persecution at the expense of their character and piety; and, on the other hand, that the Church of God languish in this land because it has too little persecution to stiffen its piety and to arouse its ardour and loyalty to Christ.

We have the promise of our Lord that, under bitter opposition, the Holy Spirit Himself will be ready to help and to bring triumphs to the disciples (Mark xiii. 11). No words of the Lord can be more comforting to the infant Church of India, as it is surrounded by heathenism, than those stirring words of comfort,—“Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom” (Luke xii. 32).

MEDITATION

In Christianity itself we must learn more the charity that sees no evil in our brothers, that suffers difference of belief and practice and that gladly permits every brother to worship God according to his own conscience. God be praised for the protection of a government which guarantees to every one a freedom to worship as he please; and which denies to any one the right to persecute another on account of his faith!

And yet we must remember that it is still the province of the servants of God to “turn the world upside down,” a faithful performance of which duty will create persecution enough from the evil one and his host.

STUDY XLIV

The Disciple and the Spread of the Kingdom

Christianity is in its very essence an outgoing and a missionary religion. It is one of the three great missionary faiths of the world. It is the religion of love; and is therefore out-reaching. It always seeks men. Christ, in the parable of the lost sheep, is the great Exemplar of the disciple. In His training of the Twelve He ever sought to impress them with the fact that His Kingdom is a world-wide Kingdom, and that their business was to carry it to the nations of the world. This is the feature of the Gospel. "To the poor the Gospel is preached," were the words by which Christ characterized His work. In the parable of the Marriage Feast (Matt. xxii) we see the message and the invitation sent forth to all men, irrespective of class or condition. Through the parable of the Sower the duty of every member of this Kingdom is shown to be that of a disseminator of the truths of the Kingdom (Matt. xiii. 3-9 and 19-23).

Christ brought His disciples into immediate and active partnership with Himself. He taught them definitely to pray, "Thy Kingdom come." Its advancement must always be near to their hearts, and a burden upon their souls. He told them to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. That was to be their first care and highest concern. He sent forth the Twelve, and later the Seventy, with the express object of training them in the responsible work of spreading the Kingdom among their fellow beings. This was an essential part of their training. He presented this duty to them under six special forms and aspects.

1. Their life itself was to be a quiet, but a potent, agency in the furtherance of the Kingdom of God. We have already seen our Lord's emphatic teaching in the Sermon on the Mount concerning the privilege of the disciple as salt and as light in the world. The natural and irresistible tendency of the normal Christian life is to reach out in helpful influence to others. Christian character, the possession of Christian graces, is in itself an outgoing and transforming agency of the Kingdom. There is something radically wrong with a Christian when his life does not enlighten and purify lives around him.

2. The Kingdom of Heaven is likened to a royal feast (Matt. xxii). It is the business of every disciple to go forth, in the Master's name, to invite the needy, everywhere, to partake of the royal bounty. He who comes to Christ for life is commanded to go forth to seek others to enjoy that life. Christians who sit at the feast, heedless of the spiritual hunger of others and of the call of the Master to go and "call them in," are not Christians at all.

MEDITATION

Think not that he only is apostle or missionary who has been "sent" by his fellow Christians to preach Christ in a foreign land. Any one who is impelled by the love of Christ and is "sent" by the Holy Spirit to help any wandering soul to return to Jesus, to bring peace and holiness to any storm-tossed soul is verily an apostle of God.

*No man to-day can be a worthy follower of Christ who does not feel Christ's constraining love sending him forth with the message of salvation to **some** perishing soul. And the greater the distance he goes on that mission the more of a "missionary" he is.*

“Fling out the banner! heathen lands
Shall see from far the glorious sight,
And nations crowding to be born,
Baptize their spirits in its light!”

STUDY XLV

The Disciple and the Kingdom—(continued).

3. The disciple is called to be a fisher of men (Matt. iv. 19). It is the unspeakable privilege of every one called by Christ into His Kingdom to gather souls, one by one, and to bring them to Christ for His saving grace. To be a fisher of men under Christ is to be a saviour of men, when he has been taught by the Master Fisherman how to do his work wisely and well.

4. The disciple is also a sower of the Word of life. Every earnest Christian, as he walks in the pathway of a spiritual life and a faithful service, is, consciously or unconsciously, dropping the seed of life in his pathway. His every word and every act may fructify in the life of others and be unto them a seed of everlasting life.

5. The disciple also is called to go forth, in self-forgetting love, to disciple and to bring into the Kingdom, men of all conditions and tongues (Matt. xxviii. 19-20). See the infinite responsibility which is involved in this last Commission of our Lord to the Christian to go forth and disciple the nations. Who can fathom the depth of this sacred duty, or reach to the highest glory of this divine privilege, of being fellow-workers with Christ in the redemption of our world? Let it not be thought that this is merely a work of proclaiming the Gospel. It is far deeper in its significance and

involves the training of men everywhere into the life, the privilege and the responsibility of the Kingdom. But in this work he has a sure word of heavenly promise:—"Lo, I am with you alway unto the end of the world."

MEDITATION

The missionary motive has much changed its emphasis during the last century. The two compelling motives of modern times are love and loyalty to our Lord who commands us "to go and disciple the nations," and the growing sense of the brotherhood of men the world over. Do these motives impel you to carry the message to-day? Thank God that in India the widest door of opportunity opens before us to save the hosts of our neighbouring non-Christians.

Verily, in this land to-day, as never before,
"The Son of God goes forth to war,
A kingly crown to gain;
His blood-red banner streams afar;
Who follows in His train?
Who best can drink His cup of woe,
Triumphant over pain,
Who patient bears his cross below,
He follows in His train."

STUDY XLVI

The Disciple and the Kingdom—(concluded).

6. Finally he is called to be a witness bearer (Acts i. 8). This is Christ's last and most precious word of command as He was leaving the world. As it is the last service asked by the Lord, so it is the easiest to render by every true Christian. It requires no learning or any other outward condition. He asks from every disciple the simple testimony of his own experience, the quiet rehearsal of his own joy, and the

unvarnished narrative of his own life in Christ. How simple, indeed, the witness borne by an unlettered Christian to the love and life of Christ within him! And yet how mighty in its influence and how unanswerable an argument for Christ and Christianity in the world to-day! What India needs pre-eminently, to-day, is the simple, earnest outspoken testimony of every humble Christian for his Lord and his salvation. The apostles of old were first of all witnesses, and they performed more and more effective service in their testimony for Christ within them than in any other way. And you and I can do more for the spread of the Kingdom of Christ in India to-day through the simple witness of our religious experience than we can in any other way. O! for more witness-bearers for Christ. But, in order that this witness may tell, it must be in harmony with their life. Life is the great witness!

Note that there is no limit placed to these deep duties of the disciples. They must take it to all men in all lands. The disciple's duty to the world is a universal one. "The field is the world;" "all nations;" "uttermost parts of the earth;" "as many as ye shall find." Every one of these expressions reveals a universal duty.

The disciple is essentially a missionary, an apostle, one "sent" by God to bring men into the Kingdom. As he grows in life and character, and as the love of Christ spreads abroad in his heart, his love will expand until it take in the whole human race into its sympathy and effort. He will feel increasingly the burden of unrequited love. He will hear the words of the Lord,— "Freely ye received, freely give" (Matt. x. 8), resounding with ever increasing fulness and clearness in his ears.

How different this is from Hinduism, which is only an ethnic faith, with no outgoing impulse of love to those born outside its pale. Christianity stands, in this particular, supreme and divinely beautiful among all the faiths of the world.

MEDITATION

“Can we whose souls are lighted
With wisdom from on high,
Can we to men benighted
The lamp of life deny?
Salvation! O Salvation!
The joyful sound proclaim,
Till each remotest nation
Has learned Messiah’s name.
Waft, waft, ye winds, His story,
And you, ye waters, roll,
Till like a sea of glory
It spreads from pole to pole;
Till o’er our ransomed nature
The Lamb for sinners slain,
Redeemer, King, Creator,
In bliss returns to reign.”

CHAPTER VII

THE TEACHING OF JESUS ABOUT THE CHURCH

STUDY I

The Character of the Church

We have already seen that, while Jesus constantly referred to the Kingdom of God, He only twice mentioned the Church. And these two references are found in one Gospel only.

But these two cases are significant and merit our attention.

Christ was so absorbed in the founding of a spiritual Kingdom that He had little time to consider the Church, which is the organized manifestation of the Kingdom in the world. The Kingdom was Christ's ideal of the life of heaven transferred to earth; and in its establishment He found His chief concern. The building up of the Christian Church more specially became the work of the Holy Ghost, begun at Pentecost. Jesus' conception of the Church differed from that of the Kingdom. And His idea of the Church itself is far removed from that of the churchly pretensions of to-day. There is not a word uttered by Him which carries the first suggestion of the immense pomp, the elaborate ritual, the complicated organization and the many-storied hierarchy of the Churches of to-day.

As we have already seen, the Church represents the chief organized activity of the Kingdom of God in the world to-day. What was Christ's idea of the Church?

1. He taught that it was a brotherhood for humble service. The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister. And all whom He called into His inner circle were called into the companionship of His service. "Be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your teacher and all ye are brethren * * * *. He that is greatest among you shall be your servant" (Matt. xxiii. 8-11). The idea of mutual and outgoing service was the fundamental one in the mind of Christ as He gathered the body of disciples around Him.

2. The Church was to our Lord a mixed body in which were found tares as well as wheat. In the parable of the tares (Matt. xiii. 24-30), we see the good

and the evil mixed together. Genuine converts and hypocrites will always be found in it, until the last great day of sifting. Even in Christ's own little circle He could turn upon them and say,—“One of you is a devil.” And from that day to this there have been devils, or, as Christ elsewhere calls them, “wolves in sheep's clothing,” among the lambs of His fold, ever ready to devour and to scatter the flock. But the Church is being increasingly purified of these men.

MEDITATION

The Church is essentially a creation of the Holy Spirit and is the special vehicle of His divine activity in the world. Within His Church and through His Church He is ever waiting to bless and save.

A brotherhood for service! It is God's own method of organizing and energizing His own people to mutual helpfulness, and in order that they may send forth their combined activity for the service of mankind. When a Church forgets, or makes secondary, its mission for loving, humble service, and consumes its thought and time upon itself in efforts at self-gratification and entertainment, then does it cease to be a centre of life, power or blessing.

STUDY II

The Church—(continued).

3. It was a gathering together of believers for fellowship and worship in Jesus' name. “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. xviii. 20). Coming together in the name of Christ and for mutual edification and spiritual blessing, they felt the assurance of His presence. And it was that promised presence of Christ

which united them together into a spiritual body which our Lord called "EKKLESIA."

4. And in the same verse we are told that the Church is the abode of Christ for blessing. In the gathering place of His saints He is found faithful to His promise as a Presence for blessing and for power. Whether we look at that Presence as the Second or the Third Person of the Trinity it matters little. For the Presence is spoken of as that of Christ and also as that of the Holy Spirit. Of this we are sure, namely, that the Lord reveals Himself in blessing and in power to His people as they are met to worship Him and to invoke His divine blessing.

5. The Church of Christ is not what may be called a natural institution. It is built by Christ Himself, as it is inhabited by Himself. "I say unto thee that thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build My Church" (Matt. xvi. 18). This rock, or "Petra," was the noble confession by Peter of Jesus as the Messiah. And upon this confession of the chief of the apostles and his companions our Lord erected the great temple of His Church upon earth. The Messiahship of our Lord here had its foundation and corner stone. And He, through His Holy Spirit, abides in this sanctuary and breathes into its membership the breath of His own life. "The confession of Peter marked an epoch in the life work of Jesus. It was an evidence of divine enlightenment by which the import of His life was beginning to be apprehended. It called forth the reply from Christ that upon this representative confession He would build His church. And that to him He would give the keys of His Kingdom and the power of binding and loosing Upon Peter then,

confessing Jesus' Messiahship and voicing the conviction of all, Christ will build His congregation." *

MEDITATION

From the wreck of humanity Jesus chose the material and purified it in the furnace of His own divine fire, and with it built His own Church upon Himself as the Foundation.

"The Church's one Foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord;
She is His new creation
By water and the word;
From heaven He came and sought her
To be His holy bride;
With His own blood He bought her,
And for her life He died.

Elect from every nation,
Yet one o'er all the earth,
Her charter of salvation
One Lord, one faith, one birth;
One holy Name she blesses,
Partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses,
With every grace endued."

STUDY III

The Church—(continued).

6. The Church of Christ has the power and the duty to discipline its members.

"If thy brother sin against thee, go show him his fault between thee and him alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he hear thee not, take with thee one or two more, that at the mouth of two

* "The Teaching of Jesus," by Dr. Stevens, pp. 153, 154.

witnesses or three every word may be established. And, if he refuse to hear them, tell it unto the church; and if he refuse to hear the church also, let him be unto thee as the Gentile and publican" (Matt. xviii. 15-17). The Church has within itself divinely given powers to cleanse itself from all evil and from all wicked men. And there is no more sacred duty placed upon the Church of God than that of purifying itself and keeping itself unspotted and unblamable before the world.

7. The Church is also an institution founded for united prayer and for combined service. "Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father who is in Heaven" (Matt. xviii. 19).

In these two functions of the Church we, perhaps, find its chief power for good in the world. The power of united Christian prayer! Who can realize its extent? And especially in these days when Christian union and fellowship are spreading among Christians of all denominations. Jealousy and mutual distrust have given way to sympathy and mutual helpfulness. And these are crystallized every year among Christians of all classes in multiplying days of prayer. And thus the Christian Church, through these occasions of united prayer, is, with ever increasing power, besieging the throne of grace and bringing abundant blessings upon earth. United prayer is the mightiest lever in the hands of God's Church to-day for overthrowing the strongholds of Satan.

In like manner, the Church is the mightiest agency in the world for inculcating the spirit of service and for inspiring men to enter into lowly paths of mutual

helpfulness and outgoing charity. To serve men, not only individually but as churches, is a gracious form of activity which the Church of God is cultivating to-day more than ever before in all its history.

MEDITATION

*The first law of the Church and the highest demand upon it is purity. "The bride of Christ" must keep her garments unspotted from the world, or she cannot continue His. In India the constant danger of the Church is to sacrifice purity on the altar of peace. Evils are left untouched and sin finds unchecked freedom "for the sake of peace." But such a peace is the peace of death. "The wisdom which cometh from above is **first** pure and **then** peaceable." To hide a sin in the Church for the sake of harmony is to destroy every hope of permanent harmony itself. A church which will wink at sin and harbour within itself impurity for fear of hurting men's feelings will ultimately ruin their souls. Such a church is unfaithful to its trust and will perish from the face of the earth.*

STUDY IV

The Church—(continued).

8. Our Lord tells us also that authority to bind and loose has been given unto His Church. "Verily, I say unto you, what things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. xviii. 18). We hardly know the full content of this expression. It has probably the same significance as the expression, "Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven." It refers to the right and duty of the Church to enact spiritual laws for the conduct of its affairs and to expel members for certain sinful conduct

which, in its judgment, disqualifies them for membership in the Church.

In a similar way our Lord, after breathing His Spirit upon His disciples, subsequent to His resurrection, said unto them, who were then the representatives of His Church,—“Whosoever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained” (John xx. 23). Thus He gave to His universal Church and to the local church, alike, definite powers and spiritual gifts and functions whereby it might keep itself pure and unspotted from the world and might confer honour and blessing upon its members.

In like manner, when Peter made His great confession of the Messiahship of Jesus, the Lord said unto him,—“I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matt. xvi. 19). Some have interpreted this to mean that Christ conferred upon Peter, on this occasion, a primacy in the Church and a supremacy in authority and influence among all Christians. But we see the incorrectness of this interpretation, because He also gave to the other apostles the same power; and, with more distinctness still, conferred it upon the individual church. It simply means that He gave to Peter and to the other Apostles as the representatives of the Church and also to the Church itself great powers of direction and discipline and blessing to all those who become members of the Christian community. Blessed is that Church which uses wisely and well these functions in order to keep itself unspotted from the world and to bring to its members the largest blessing of life.

MEDITATION

Men love power. And the Church of God has too much coveted the power which belongs to dominion in external matters. It has neglected the power which belongs to service in favour of the power which is connected with earthly rule. Our Lord foresaw this evil and said to the Apostles,—“Neither be ye called Masters.” St. Peter would be horrified to see what divine authority is ascribed to him and to his “successors” by a certain section of the Church to-day. The craving after ecclesiastical power has been the dominant passion and chief weakness of the Church in the past.

After all, it is not by thrones and sceptres, but by the humble emblems and habit of service, that the Church of God is to attain unto its power in the world and is to prove itself worthy to possess the keys of the Kingdom of God.

STUDY V

The Church—(concluded).

9. Our Lord taught also that the Church is an invincible body. “Upon this rock (that is, upon Peter’s testimony to Jesus’ Messiahship) I will build my Church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matt. xvi. 18). The Spirit of God Himself dwells in the Church. He is there to direct its affairs, to meet all the attacks of the evil one, to defend it against all the powers of hell, and to clothe it with that spiritual armour which will make it invulnerable to all the attacks of sin and of the devil. And the Church, to-day, is mightier than ever before, because it is clothed more than ever in the past with His Spirit of holiness and love.

10. He also gave to the Church the holy sacraments—the initial rite of baptism, expressive of the purity of the Church and of its cleansing by the Spirit; and

the eucharist, which is a continued remembrance of Him and an oft-recurring opportunity of renewing its vows and of rededicating itself to Him and to His service. "This do in remembrance of Me" (Luke xxii. 19). This is His command to His Church upon earth; and in this way does the Church keep herself in frequent touch and constant communion with her Lord.

MEDITATION

Can we doubt the ultimate triumph of God's Church upon earth? Is it not built upon "Heaven's" eternal truth backed by God's irrevocable word of promise and animated by the indwelling love and omnipotence of the Holy Spirit? Thus it is compared to Mount Zion which cannot be moved.

"Glorious things of thee are spoken,
Zion, city of our God;
He whose word cannot be broken,
Formed thee for His own abode:
On the Rock of Ages founded,
What can shake thy sure repose?
With salvation's walls surrounded,
Thou mayst smile at all thy foes."

CHAPTER VIII

JESUS' TEACHING CONCERNING SATAN AND THE POWERS OF EVIL

STUDY I

The Power of Evil Spirits

Jesus was a thorough believer in the existence, ubiquity and activity of evil spirits. He largely accepted the Jewish belief of His day in this matter; only that He purified it of its excrescences.

According to this belief it was held that there was a kingdom of evil spirits, fully organized, with Satan, or Beelzebub, at its head (Matt. xii. 25-37).

The powers of Satan are described as being great.

1. He claimed royal rights in the world. In his temptation of the Lord he assumed the prerogative to give unto Him the Kingdoms of the world and the glory of them (Luke iv. 6). Our Lord also called him the "Prince of the World" (John xiv. 30).

2. This satanic kingdom is opposed to the Kingdom of God. Jesus maintained that these two were essentially and mutually antagonistic. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. vi. 24). They are opposed in spirit, principle and objects!

3. It is said that physical maladies are caused by evil spirits. "Ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had bound lo, these eighteen years, to have been loosed from this bond on the day of the Sabbath" (Luke xiii. 16). Disease, in all its forms, was regarded by the Jews of that day as the work of spirits dwelling within the body. And a whole body was considered by them, as truly as a whole soul, the work and the abode of God.

MEDITATION

There is a mighty conflict waging in the world of spirit. Jesus always recognized it, and no thoughtful man has ever been ignorant of it. It is equally true and manifest that the powers of evil are arrayed and organized under one great leader. We may emphasize the subjectivity of sin. It is eminently a thing of the heart. And yet we must accept the consensus of the opinion of the world, the teaching of the Bible and the declarations of our Lord, that the forces of evil, as truly as the forces of good, are under a great leader.

We have an enemy as we have a Friend to our spiritual life. This is the conflict of the ages. And it is the subtlety and power of this arch-enemy which so frequently brings us to grief in this spiritual struggle.

STUDY II

Devil-Possession

4. Devil possession was ascribed to this power. And our Lord apparently accepts this popular belief as His own. We frequently read of His contact with possessed persons, and of his exorcising demons. The most conspicuous and striking illustration is that of the man of the country of the Gerasenes (Mark v. 1-14). This, I say, is the most striking, because it is the most indubitable, case of possession, and one that seems impossible of explanation upon the rival theory of nervous disease. It is claimed by many that our Lord's attitude towards cases of possession was merely one of acquiescence in the false theory of the day. But neither His language nor His whole treatment of this case can harmonize with such a theory. Without doubt, He is represented here as not only believing in the genuineness of possession, but also as proving it, unequivocally, by permitting the legion of spirits to pass into the swine and to drive them into the sea. It is hard to prove, at the same time, our Lord's sincerity and His disbelief in the reality of devil-possession.

5. These spirits also worked evil in the minds of men—moral and spiritual corruption. "Simon, Simon, behold Satan asked to have you that he might sift you as wheat, but I made supplication for thee that thy faith fail not" (Luke xxii. 31, 32). These words of our

Lord do not impress one as being parabolic, or allegorical. The work of Satan was to Him a genuine work of evil in the heart; for was He not constantly familiar with the work of the insidious tempter upon His own heart? In His parables also, He frequently refers to the evil one. "When anyone heareth the word of the kingdom and understandeth it not, then cometh the evil one and snatcheth away that which hath been sown in his heart" (Matt. xiii. 19). Thus, to our Lord, the power that tempts a man's soul is as truly objective as it is subjective (see also Mark iv. 15). Temptation was regarded by our Lord as the doorway of Satan's entrance into the human heart.

There is also a vividness and a touch of reality in His parable of the unclean spirit which went out of a man, but subsequently returned, taking with himself seven other spirits more evil than himself (Matt. xii. 43-45). This, certainly, can be interpreted as referring to the power of sinful habit. That was our Lord's way of giving personal objectivity to this power, and thus carrying conviction to those people of poetic mind.

MEDITATION

Is devil-possession a reality in India to-day? Let him deny it who may. I have seen many cases of so-called possession, but none which I could not explain on physical and nervous grounds. And yet the common belief of the people, and recent experiences in connection with Christian revivals in the land, lead me to suspend judgment, with a tendency however, towards believing in its truth.

The oriental mind seems to be as open to the experience of, as it is to the belief in, possession. In humility and docility let us believe in the mysteries and powers which exist about us and pray that the Lord deliver us from all the powers of evil.

STUDY III

Jesus and Satan

Jesus calls Satan the father of lies. And all liars are his children. Moral deceptions of all kinds come from him (John viii. 44). He even takes God's own Word and converts it to a lie to suit his own purposes, as he did in his temptations of the Lord. And we are, moreover, told that, for purposes of deception, he can transform himself into an angel of light (2 Cor. xi. 14).

Satan is, moreover, called a murderer, who has the power of spiritual death conferred upon him (John viii. 44).

Our Lord Himself was in constant conflict with Satan. The three recorded temptations only illustrate the struggle which was continued throughout His life, and the victory which He uniformly obtained over the evil one. Out of every conflict with Satan He came forth unscathed and strengthened for His divine service.

Moreover, Jesus came into this world that He might destroy the works of the devil. "To this end was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John iii. 8). Our Lord said, "Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (John xii. 31). Of the work of the Holy Spirit Jesus said that He "will convict the world in respect of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged." Our Lord's mission was pre-eminently for the purpose of undoing the mighty works of evil which Satan had wrought in the world and which he is now also carrying on with unabated vigour.

Jesus sent forth His disciples that they might have power over the evil spirits (Mark xvi. 17; Luke ix. 1).

And we later read that the Seventy returned from their evangelistic tour with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject unto us in Thy name" (Luke x. 17).

Moreover, we are told by Jesus that hell itself has been prepared for the devil and his angels. And it is with them in their sufferings that wicked men will find their lot in the coming eternity (Matt. xxv. 41).

MEDITATION

In His great work of redemption our Lord frequently refers to His struggles with, and power over, all evil spirits; and He has promised His aid to everyone of His disciples that he also might triumph. We are inspired not only by His promise of help, but also by the cheer and inspiration of His victories and sympathy. "In that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted." "For we have not a High Priest that cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been, in all points, tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace, to help us in time of need" (Heb. ii. 18; iv. 15, 16).

CHAPTER IX

JESUS' TEACHING ABOUT THE FUTURE

STUDY I

Resurrection and Immortality

We have already referred to the activity of our Lord after His death; and also, to some aspects of His teaching concerning the future life of man. We shall now consider His general teaching about the future life.

Jesus never directly taught the doctrine of the immortality of the human soul. He always assumed and dwelt upon the provision made by God to meet it. He did, indeed, in His conflict with the Sadducees, who denied the future life, maintain the present existence of those who had died. "Neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection." Referring to Moses, who said, when he called the Lord, "The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob," he declared that God "is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto Him" (Luke xx. 36, 38). It was only as He met these Sadducee heretics that He had to argue for the future life.

The Jewish Scriptures say surprisingly little about the future life. The warnings and inspirations of the Old Testament are, in the main, based upon temporal considerations and not upon those of the future life.

The Pharisees had elaborated certain teachings which were in vogue when Christ came to the earth; and which He accepted on the whole, after purifying them of their physical grossness.

He maintained that all will rise from their tombs to a judgment which will correspond to their past. "All that are in the tombs shall hear His voice and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment" (John v. 28, 29).

He connected the future of His disciples with His own resurrection and life. "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John xiv. 19). He claimed indeed that He Himself was the resurrection and life of the disciples. "I am the resurrection and the life; he

that believeth on Me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die" (John xi. 25-26). It appears from this passage that the future life of man is entirely dependent upon, and a part of, the life of Jesus Himself.

MEDITATION

How strangely dark the horizon of eternity when Christ came into the world! Compare the teaching of ancient prophets and Jesus and feel the contrast. He was the first to pierce the darkness of eternity and to throw back the veil and reveal the view of an endless life of bliss. Nor was this strange when we remember that He Himself was the source and power of an everlasting life. Immortal bliss is His gift and is to be enjoyed in His Presence.

STUDY II

The Future of the Godly

Concerning this future life our Lord made definite declarations.

1. The life which He offered and promised to His own was not the Buddhistic *Nirvana* or the Hindu *Sayutchā*—an unconscious, impersonal existence—but an active, blissful, personal life. He calls it the life more abundant (John x. 10). It is the life that abounds in all that is blissful and beautiful, in all that is sweet and helpful, a life of unceasing joy and of grateful service. The activities of the soul will not cease at death, but will go on multiplying in all that constitutes unmixed happiness.

2. He tells us that in that life each one shall receive according to the faithfulness which he has exercised in the present life. In the parable of the

Pounds (Luke xix. 12-26), He tells us that faithfulness in a little here, means enjoyment of much there. In the parable of the Talents also He made faithfulness in the use of present mercies to be the basis of life's possession and usefulness in the world to come.

3. He moreover taught that faithful service here does not lead to rest from service, but larger service, there. With the "Well done" plaudit of the Master, at that last day, there comes also, "I will set thee over many things" (Matt. xxv. 23); or "Have thou authority over ten cities" (Luke xix. 17). There is a rest *in* labour as well as a rest *from* labour. Our reward shall be the former and not the latter. It is a joy to think, that the service of the disciple of the Lord, which brings to him the highest joy here upon earth, will not end with death. It will continue and will be glorified in the world to come. Heaven will have no crown or harp for the lazy.

MEDITATION

The heaven which we look for is different from that of the Hindu and indeed different from that of our fathers who hoped for rest from toil and labour. We seek for a higher service and not for a cessation of service; for a new activity and greater opportunity and responsibility and not less of the same. The cares and interests which we have now in the Kingdom of God will then be sweetened but not reduced. They will be transmuted into unspeakable joy.

Do we so live now that we shall then be prepared for the larger service indicated by our Lord?

STUDY III

The Future of the Godly—(continued).

4. This life will be unceasing. It is the eternal life which is assured by Christ and the Father. "I give

unto them eternal life and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of My hands. My Father, who hath given them unto Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand" (John x. 28, 29). This double assurance of the eternal continuity of the saint's life in Heaven is one of the most comforting messages of our Lord to man. The life which He brings is everlasting life, a life that is hid in the hollow of the hands of the Son and of the Father!

5. This life will be a re-union of the soul and the body—the latter will be purified of its dross and will be a fit temple for the eternal abode of the ransomed soul. We know nothing, definitely, about the soul when not clothed upon with the body; nor do we know the definite character of the body which will minister to the needs of the soul in its final estate. But we are assured that it will be suited to its eternal work in the presence of God throughout eternity. To know this is enough.

6. Note the high character of this life. It will be exalted above all earthly ties and relationships. Our Lord says,—“They that are accounted worthy to attain to that world and the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage; for neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels” (Luke xx. 35, 36). We know little of the angelic life and its holy and exalted relations. But we know that, as the earthly grossness of our life shall be left behind, so shall the narrow ties and influences of this life be lost and transcended in the life beyond.

MEDITATION

*Listen to those wonderful words of the great "Apostle of Love":—"Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that..... we shall be like Him." Oh, the infinite possibility of the enrichment of the life to come! Sons, **now**; but what, **then**? "We know not." There may be still unrevealed to us a relationship to God which will be incomparably more precious and glorious than that of Sonship—a relationship whose surest mark will be likeness to our Lord. That will satisfy the soul throughout eternity. Kinship with earth will cease to charm, and heavenly relationships will absorb the ambition of the heart.*

STUDY IV

The Future of the Godly—(concluded).

7. The future life will be a life with Christ.

"In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you that where I am, there you may be also" (John xiv. 2, 3). In the parable of the Ten Virgins the wise virgins went in with the bridegroom to the marriage feast. And to the faithful servant, the Lord said, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. xxv. 10, 21). Living in the presence of Christ, enjoying that presence and drawing light and inspiration from it—this, indeed, is life in the fulness of its blessing and in its richest significance.

8. This will be Heaven.

Hindus and Buddhists have built up, in their faiths, many heavens, all of which are only temporary in their character and offer only transient blessings. The Heaven which our Lord promises to His own is an abode of unending bliss. And He spoke of only one

Heaven. But its portals are wide open that all His may enter therein; and its pleasures will satisfy for evermore.

Our Lord spoke of Heaven as His kingdom (Matt. xxv. 34). It is where He rules without hindrance, and where there is no dissentient voice or unsatisfied soul.

He also called it His Father's House of many mansions (John xiv. 2). He speaks of it also in parable, as we have just seen, as the marriage house of feasting, where the bridegroom is the light and cheer of all.

In other parts of the Scriptures it is described as the "Heavenly Canaan," and also as the "Heavenly Jerusalem." Human language is incapable of describing the riches of its beauty and its joy. It has been compared to all that represents comfort, joy and transcendent blessing. But not one, or all, of these visions of Heaven can give but the slightest picture of the future or lead us to realize but the meanest conceptions of the eternal inheritance which awaits the people of God. All we can say is that it is an eternity of conscious bliss, of happy activity, of loving service, of heavenly communion and fellowship with, and of praise to, the triune God.

MEDITATION

"O Paradise! O Paradise!

Who doth not crave for rest?

Who would not seek the happy land

Where they that loved are blest?

Where loyal hearts and true

Stand ever in the light,

All rapture through and through,

In God's most holy sight.

O Paradise! O Paradise!

The world is growing old;
Who would not be at rest and free
Where love is never cold?

O Paradise! O Paradise!

I want to sin no more;
I want to be as pure on earth
As on thy spotless shore."

STUDY V

The Future of the Wicked

The future of the wicked also is described by Jesus in a few striking words; it gives us brief intimations of the terrible experiences of those who reject God here upon the earth.

He speaks of that future as:—

1. A casting out—a separation from God and the good. He said that the unprofitable servant shall be cast out into the outer darkness (Matt. xxv. 30). There is nothing more terrible than this thought of being cast out and for ever separated from every source of joy, from every touch of sympathy and from every hope of help and inspiration to be good.

2. And this separation will result in darkness and unrelieved sorrow. It is described as "weeping and gnashing of teeth," "eternal fire," "the worm that dieth not" (Matt. xxv. 41). These are figurative expressions descriptive of the torments of conscience and of uncontrollable and consuming passion that will never leave the soul or give it rest and peace.

3. We are also told that in that land of torments there will be gradations of punishments. "That servant who knew his Lord's will and made not ready nor did

according to his will shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not and did things worthy of stripes shall be beaten with few stripes" (Luke xii. 47, 48). Even as in Heaven there will be degrees of blessing and of bliss; so in the nether world justice demands that punishment shall be meted out in proportion to men's varying deserts.

This punishment will be eternal, unending, everlasting. If language means anything, our Lord's words are certainly intended to convey to us the teaching that the punishment of the wicked, like the reward of the good, will be without end. Every word of the language used by our Lord for this purpose expressed endlessness. He calls it "eternal punishment" (Matt. xxv. 46); "unquenchable fire" (Mark ix. 43); "where their worm dieth not." These expressions can certainly have but one meaning, and out of them one cannot glean a ray of hope for those who die impenitent. Likewise, in His parable concerning Dives and Lazarus, our Lord leads Abraham to say,—“There is a great gulf fixed, that they that would pass from hence to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from thence to us” (Luke xvi. 26). And equally terrible are His words, descriptive of sin against the Holy Spirit,—“Whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come” (Matt. xii. 32). Doubtless, this forgiveness will never be sought by him who is surrounded by the awfully degrading environment of hell; nor will he there cease to sin against his Maker.

MEDITATION

That will be the great Day of Separation. Will it be separation from the good or from the evil? That will be an

irrevocable judgment, an everlasting doom. This vision of the eternity of the sinner is the most terrible of all—to bid a final good-bye to God and all the godly, to all of brightness and of beauty, to all which brought sweetness and sunshine to earthly life and to enter into exclusive and eternal companionship with all that is mean and hateful and debasing—this is of the very essence of hell. And millions are choosing that doom with persistence and reckless determination to-day!

STUDY VI

The Future of the Wicked—(continued).

This is a terrible doctrine to believe and to teach. And because of its severity some deny it, and try to explain it away.

Some claim that “destruction” means the annihilation of the soul. They speak of “life in Christ”; they deny the natural immortality of the soul; and that he only will long survive death who has received by faith the seed of life from Christ. Others, they say, will be punished and then will gradually pass out of existence. Others believe in the “larger hope,” basing their faith upon Matt. xii. 32 and similar passages. They decline to believe that the Father will for ever punish, and that evil will for ever persist against His universal grace and love. They maintain that when Christ said—“and I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me”—He meant the ultimate, universal, redemption of our race.

It would, doubtless, be more agreeable to all if they could accept this doctrine of universal redemption. But our Lord’s words seem incapable of bearing that interpretation. They are the most definite, as they are the most terrible, expressions ever made in reference to the future life of the ungodly.

But, sad and terrible, though they be, there seems to be nothing unnatural about the doctrine of endless punishment, if it be only associated with the doctrine of "endless sin." For our Lord said,—“Whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin” (*Gk. sinning*) (Mark iii. 29). So long as a man continues in sin, it is not improper that this punishment should continue. In any case no one can study the words of our Lord in connection with the future destiny of the ungodly without feeling that the picture is one of terrible sadness and gloom; and, moreover, it is a picture drawn by One who loved and who loves man as no one else ever did or can do; One who gave Himself unto death that He might bring life unto these rebellious members of our race.

It is much pleasanter to look at the other side of this picture and to rejoice in the assurance of unending joy in the presence of the Father to all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and who live daily as in His presence upon earth.

MEDITATION

*Remember, reader, that your attitude to Christ and His teaching to-day is to settle your destiny for eternity. What think you of Christ? And what does **He** think of you and your conduct to-day?*

“Eternity! Eternity!

How long art thou, Eternity!

As long as God is God, so long

Endure the pains of hell and wrong,

So long the joys of heaven remain;

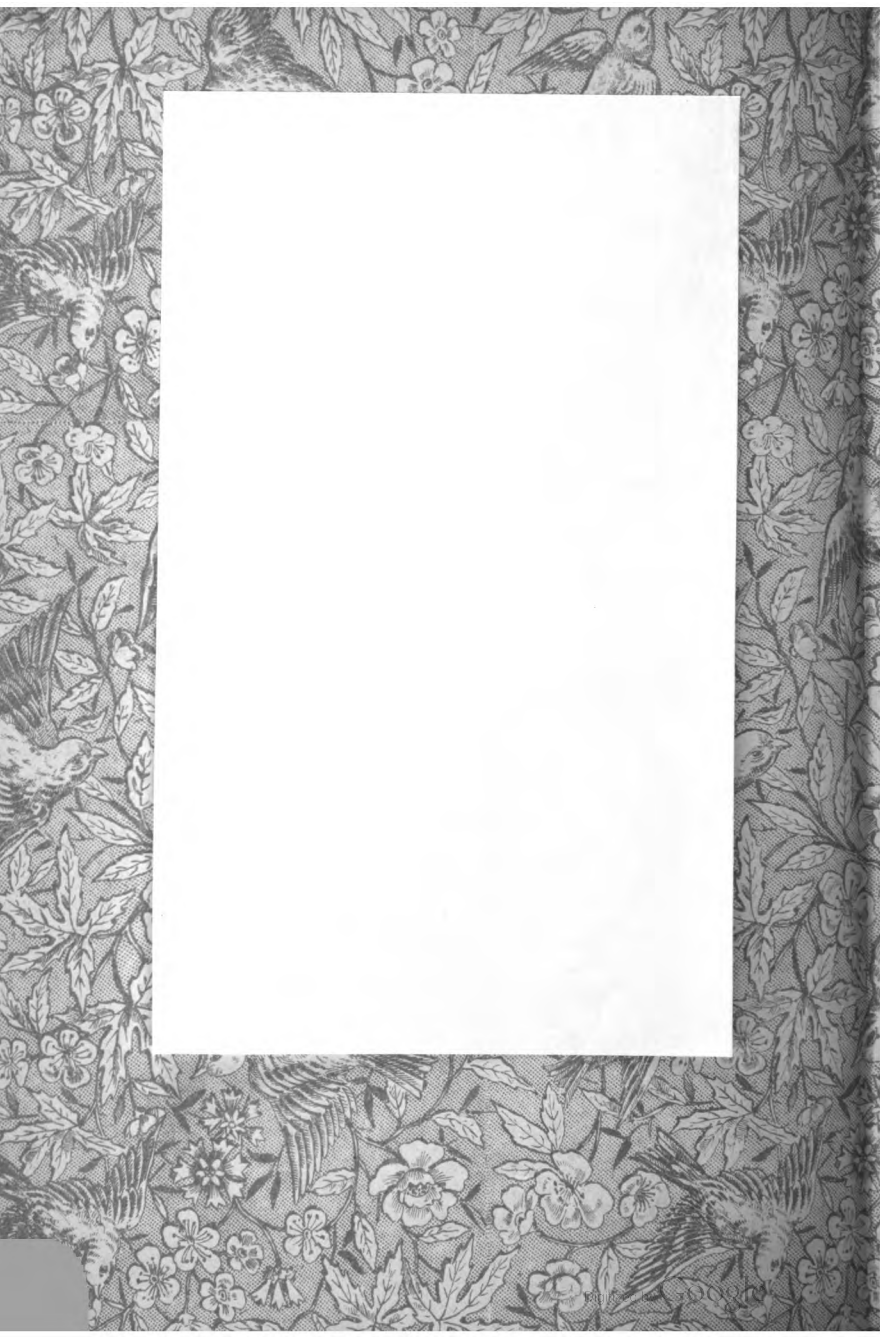
Oh, lasting joy! Oh, lasting pain!

Ponder, O man, Eternity

Eternity, Eternity !
How long art thou, Eternity !
O man, full oft thy thoughts should dwe
Upon the pains of sin and hell,
And on the glories of the pure,
That do beyond all time endure ;
Ponder, O man, Eternity !”

THE END.

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